Within the Arms of the Ever Blooming:

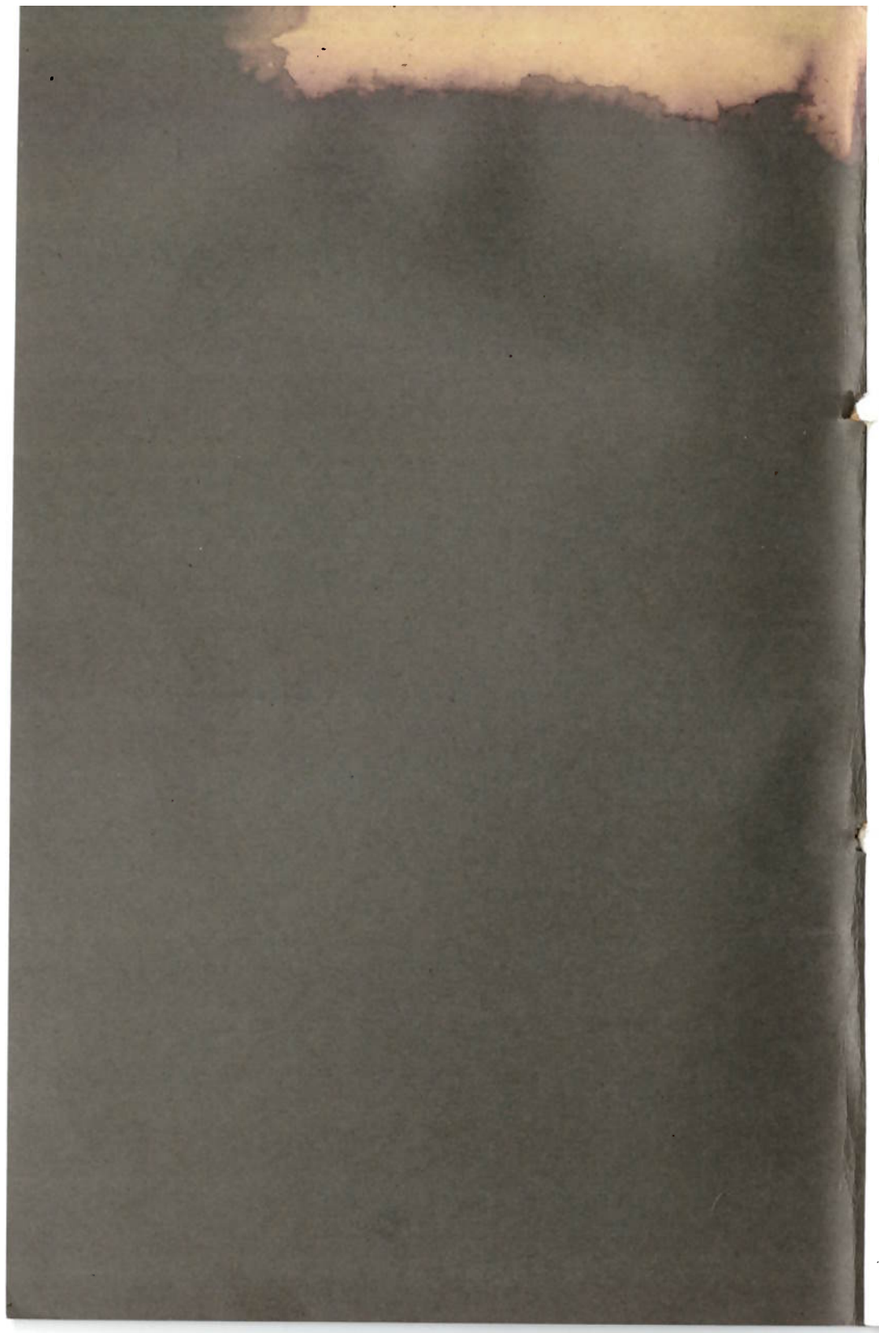
Wolfhetan
Procer Veneficus
Georg Heym
Paul Shepard
Fauna
Set Sothis Nox La

"Immortal Amarant, a flower which once
In paradise, fast by the tree of life,
Began to bloom: but soon for man's offence
To heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows,
And flowers aloft, shading the fount of life,
And where the river of bliss through midst of heaven
Rolls o'er elysian flowers her amber stream:
With these that never fade the spirits elect
Bind their resplendent locks."

John Milton, Paradise Lost (1667), iii 353:

Amarantos

Issue 1



Amarantos

is a periodical dedicated to the ennoblement of the human search for meaning. This forum for the discovery of our nature, whose function is solar in kind, represents to us an investigation into the spirit, consciousness, and matter of humanness. We have set out on an open-hearted pursuit of truth and the divine, utterly transcending the mire of realism and postmodernity. We seek to breathe spirit back into the word and to rescue the imperiled human organism from an immersion in the dead world civilization has built.

We publish sporadically but regularly in an effort to enliven the discourse surrounding the various underground channels we recognize as the seedbeds for the coming Spring. We celebrate atavism in all its forms, recognizing in the rejection of the modern the blossoming of the indissoluble spirit of Life. Shining a fiery torch on the parchment of mind, we seek to discover an essence and burn away the rest. This is a vehicle for the ascension of the inner flame, Amarantos is a journal in pursuit of the interior and exterior Beyond.

Within these pages you will find a selection of writings that abide by many paths. The conjoining of these is not meant to necessitate the formulation of a coherent totality, though in this potentially paradoxical synthesis we presuppose that many paths can align in the most startling ways towards a similar direction. The inclusion of these disparate forms is based on our desire to unearth those strands we find meaningful and bring them to print, as well as the need to investigate certain interests that speak towards our mission printed above.

Brian Booty (aka. Set Sothis Nox La) has been enthralled with Literature, the Arts and independent underground music for over 20 years, pursuing various strands of engaging, alternate thought that diverge from that of mainstream culture. This engagement led to the compulsion to create a discourse through these interests, which is not strictly limited to discourse about these interests.

J. Joshua Phillips has been contributing to underground music cultures for over 20 years, focusing on what could be termed the "dark arts" for the past 10. He has lent his musical talents to numerous projects from the Cascadian bioregion, and organizes festivals and events throughout the area. His projects and events all share a particular focus: engaging with the beyond, and thereby opening to the transformative potential of Spirit. He is dedicated to infusing the discourse surrounding the subcultures Amaranthos studies with honesty, passion, and depth.

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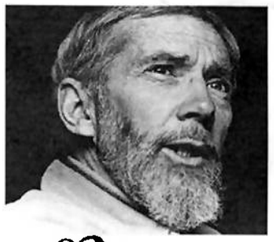


Paul Shepard

"The Relevance of the Past"

(from Coming Home to the Pleistocene)

Widely touted as the "grandfather of deep ecology," Paul Shepard was an enormously influential writer and thinker dedicated to an honest and thoroughgoing exploration of the human situation. His texts, including The Others: How Animals Made Us Human, The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game, and the seminal Nature and Madness, have been instrumental in transforming modern ideas of prehistoric human existence.

Having almost single-handedly invented a new mode of philosophizing, Shepard wove together the disparate fields of biology, anthropology, psychology and theology (amongst many others) in his relentless pursuit of truth. He called this new discipline Human Ecology, which has since gained prominence in academic settings around the world, resulting in a new wave of scientific and philosophical inquiry that investigates his daring conclusions.

This essay, from the anthology Coming Home to the Pleistocene, presents a nice overview of some of the major themes in Shepard's work. Though it is focused specifically on time and notions of history, we also see hints of the theoretical framework that gave rise to this particular investigation. Enjoy...

- J. Joshua Phillips

History is not a chronicle but a Hebrew invention about the way the cosmos works, a notion that became the accepted "word" for the civilized world. One of the problems with this version is that it does not see the past reoccurring in the present. Yet Octavio Paz reminds us: "The past reappears because it is a hidden present. I am speaking of the real past, which is not the same as "what took place"...What took place is indeed the past, yet there is something that...takes place but does not wholly recede into the past, a constantly returning present." History as written documentation of "what happened" is antithetical to a "constantly returning present," and as a result its perception of time and change is narrowly out of harmony with the natural world. Written history is the word. Time is an unfinished, extemporaneous narrative.

Prehistoric humans, in contrast, were autochthonous, that is, "native to their place." They possessed a detailed knowledge that was passed on from generation to generation by oral tradition through myths—stories that framed their beliefs in the context of ancestors and the landscape of the natural world. They lived within a "sacred geography" that consisted of a complex knowledge of place, terrain, and plants and animals embedded in a phenology of seasonal cycles. But they were also close to the earth in a spiritual sense, joined in an intricate configuration of sacred associations with the spirit of place within their landscape. Time and space as well as animals—humans—gods—all life and nonliving matter formed a continuum that related to themes of fertility and death and the sacredness of all things. During prehistory, which is most of the time that humans have been on earth, the dead and their burial places were venerated and mythic ancestors were part of the living present, the dreamtime ones whose world was also the ground of present being. Ignore them as we will, they are with us still.

The roots of history as written, as Herbert Schneidau has shown us, were formulated by the Hebrew demythologizers who created a reality outside the rhythmic cosmos of the gentiles who surrounded them and who were grounded in prehistoric, mythical consciousness with rituals of eternal return, mimetic conveyance of values and ideas, the central metaphor of nature as culture, and, most of all, the incorporation of the past into the present. Unlike history, prehistory does not participate in the dichotomy that divides experience into good and evil, eternal and temporal. Rather, it belongs to a syncretic system that accepts multiple truths and meanings and attempts to reconcile them. This state of consciousness is not due to a rational process. The mythic mind, as John Cobb Jr. has explained it, does not recognize the "separateness of subject and object" but instead sees "a flow of subjective and objective contributions...bound together" where there is no "clear consciousness of subject as subject or of object as object."

The Hebrews, who initiated the move away from the earth and toward the historical view, did not try to reconcile opposing beliefs. Nor did they have a sense of place. To the contrary they insisted on "deracination from the spirit of place" and asserted that they were "journeyers" to the Promised Land. In the Hebrew view, the realm of the sacred was granted only to Yahweh. Objections to the oldest traditions of time and past imply a deeper strain that has to do not with the content of history, but with a self-conscious alienation that first became evident in the Hebrews. The assault on the local wisdom of primal peoples culminated in the outwardness of nature and the inwardness of the personality.

Focusing on heavenly domination over earthly phenomena, history became an attempt to look away from earth. The Hebrews and the Greeks, who were their contemporaries and whose parallel culture in the Eastern Mediterranean shares many common features with that of the Hebrews, saw alienation as the touchstone of humankind. They understood themselves as outside the nature-centered belief systems of other peoples, whose cosmologies linked past, present, and future in stories and art with eternal cycles and sacred places. History is a way of perceiving human existence that opposes and destroys its predecessor, the mythic world, which sees time as a continuous return and space as sacred, where all life is autochthonous.

The Hebrew and Greek founders of history were not so intent on rejecting nature as they were on understanding temporal events as unique. The Hebrews, the Greeks, and, following in their steps, the Christians asserted that events are novel, uncertain, tangential, and contingent rather than embedded and structured, the result of the thoughts of a living, omniscient, unknowable God. The past was a highway on which there could be no return.

The prototype of this linear sequence of ever-new events, where nothing was repeated and to which nothing returned, was the Old Testament, a record of tribal endogamy, identity and vision. Thirty-two hundred years later, history has grown fat with the civilized written records that replaced oral traditions and added vast secular data to religious history. This breakaway from the mythic life, which linked our species to the natural world, began when the early Hebrews rejected the nature/process stories and rites of their pagan contemporaries for the myth of a single god who, outside the world, reached into his creation, willfully deranging its rhythms, acting arbitrarily, making life a kind of novel, a history. The effort of the Hebrews to distance themselves from the sacred immanence in the natural order initiated what Cobb has called the "reflective consciousness" of humankind in the "Axial Period" (between 800 and 200 B.C.)—a transitional state of human cognition in which the archaic mind was altered and a "conscious control of symbolization and action" emerged. Although the Hebrews had begun to develop a "reflective consciousness," a state of consciousness in which they actively attempted to understand their place in the greater scheme of things, they were still locked into a kind of projection of their unconscious that symbolized subjective elements arising from a deep substratum of the mind.

The Greeks, Cobb argues, succeeded in distancing themselves from sacred immanence in the natural order through further development of the "reflective consciousness." The change of the "structure of existence," the way they envisioned the possibilities in

their lives, moved from the unconscious to the conscious. In the case of Homeric Man, "the object of conscious experience...was primordially the sensuously given world...in which the subjective was subordinated to the objective." Out of this grew "esthetic distancing"—an ability to see beauty in the world, in nature, in the human body, and in temples and other human artifacts, esthetically pleasing forms corresponding to rational psychic structures. By esthetic projection of beauty and perfection onto their gods, Cobb says, "the Greeks subordinated mythical meanings to the rational consciousness...Gods were conceived as visual objects" and an "intelligible order" was imposed on the myths. In this way the mythical became the mythological. Things could be treasured for their beauty as opposed to their utility or their numinousness. Careful study of the objects of art resulted in "demonstrated laws of form and quantitative mathematical laws," which allowed replication and thus the development of mathematics, natural science, philosophy, drama, and performance music. Science and esthetics emerged together—invented for the West, so to speak, by the Greeks. Greatness was equivalent to excellence and beauty rather than to morality. The gods became drama and sculpture; nature was reduced to the sensed source of intellectual description and artistic power.

For Christians the crucial events "on earth" were finished except for a final judgment. Christian existence was defined as spiritual existence that expressed itself through "radical responsibility for oneself" as well as "self-transcendence" through love of others. Christians further emphasized the distinction between the word of a patriarchal god and all myths of an earth mother—thereby separating themselves even more from the numinous earth and its processes. Individual responsibility for self-scrutiny in terms of sin or good works took precedence over the timeless sacredness of the earth and its processes. The notion of the unreturning arrow of historical time in the Western mind was taken up by Christianity.

Our hunger for history, our obsession with it, is exacerbated by the lack of meaning in our own personal experience created by the historical attitude. Herbert J. Muller presents us with a paradox: "Our age is notorious for its want of piety or sense of the past...Our is nevertheless more historically minded than any previous age." Anxiety about our circumstances, and our identity, grows more acute the more we burrow into that sand dune of the written past. The nature of the primitive world is at the center of our modern anxiety about essence, appearance, and change because history cannot resolve for us the problem of change, which was mythically assured for many thousands of years as a form of renewal. Since we humans are not now what we once were—bacteria or quadruped mammals or apish hominids—other forms of life are irrelevant. The truth of history is that the more we know the stranger our lives become.

In the popular imagination our life in nature (everything outside this historical past) is in doubt, a shadowy and dangerous jungle from which we have escaped. In our search for ourselves, history narrows that identity to portraits, ideology, the adventure of power, and abstractions to which nations commit human purpose, to what feminists call "his-story." Carlos Fuentes writes: "Before, time was not our own, it was providence's own sphere of influence; we insisted on making it ours just so we could say that history is the work of man...If such is the case we must make ourselves responsible for time, for the past and the future, because there is no longer any providence...We must sustain the past, invent the future."

History, like a biased science, verifies rather than demonstrates. Whether its narrative is interesting or horrible, its events are irretrievable as personal experience. It deals with an arc of time and measured location. Its creative principle is external rather than intrinsic to the world. Deity is distant, unknowable, and arbitrary. The historical past is the equivalent of a distant place in a cosmos whose first law is that you cannot be two things, in two places, or in two times, at once. It contradicts the fabulous tales, called "oral tradition," about an endless return. Having shaken off the garment of myth and put on the robes of dry history, we gain the detachment and skepticism that define the Western personality and civilization.

History rejects the ambiguities of overlapping identity, space, and time and creates its own dilemmas of fragmentation and alienation—alienation from the domains of nonhuman life, primitive ancestors, tribal peoples, and the landscape itself. Living within this historic tradition, we find the meaning of life eluding us in certain significant ways.

Lacking a sense of the spiritual presence of plants and animals and of nonliving matter, we do not feel our ancestors watching or their lives pressing on our own as did prehistoric peoples. N.K. Sandars, an expert in prehistoric art, tells us that animals, as depicted in sculptures and cave art and reliefs, are never neutral. They carry meaning as "a profane source of food" but are also "sometimes a supernatural being, or even a god." Historical consciousness gradually weeded out animal metaphors, organic continuities, and especially the perception of nonhuman spirits of the earth.

A repeated question of our time is, "How do we become native to this place?" History cannot answer this question, for history itself is the great de-nativizing process, the great deracinator. Historical time is invested in change, novelty, and escape from the renewing stability and continuity of the great natural cycles that ground us to place and the greater community of life on earth. As Norman O. Brown writes: "Man, the discontented animal, unconsciously seeking the life proper to its species, is man in time. Repression transforms the timeless instinctual compulsion to repeat into the forward moving dialectic of neurosis which is history."

In this new "Space Age" we are antigeographical. Place no longer exists as the womb of our childhood and the setting of myth. The economic unity of humankind, the multinational corporation, and the technology of travel and communication join us to all parts of the earth yet leave us homeless. Being largely placeless, the "world religions" belong to history, where "going native" is a misanthrope's hopeless escape or a "romantic nostalgia." Like thankless children, failing to acknowledge our connection to prehistory, we can live only in history, repressing our deep past as though it were an elemental irrelevance.

What was once the slow movement through habitats and terrains, enriched by narratives and the ongoing reciprocity with true residents, has been reduced to what Michael Sorkin calls "evocations of travel...places that refer to someplace else...the urbanism of universal equivalence," and electronic simulacra. These false landscapes, such as Disneyland, instead of containing secret reflections of our individual maturity, yield immature adults whose mythology is Mickey Mouse. Nature becomes a stage where the regimes and tales of power are enacted. To conventional history, technocracy adds the planetary imperialism of franchise business and the wasted landscapes of industrial and nationalistic enterprise, recreation as sheer kinesthetic motion, and the vacuity of the escape industries—as Sorkin puts it, the "celebration of the existing order of things in the guise of escaping from it."

"Esthetic distancing," a distilled and rarefied concept of art passed on in Western culture from the Greeks, has become in our times an obsession with abstractions. Gallery art, stage drama, concert music—all so profoundly admired—are abstractions based on a logic of form. Virtuosity has become identified with celebrity and artistic excellence. Participatory arts that were once part of everyday life have become performance with the majority of humans in a spectator role.

Music is fundamental to our wholeness, our sense of primordial multiplicity. But observe what has happened to it in our time. The exaggerated solemnity of music in temples, churches, and mosques is a measure of the loss of joy and of organic sound basic to hundreds of indigenous religions marked by "mythic" imagination, the use of the skin-and-wood drum and group improvisation. Making music is often completely absent

in the lives of our children.

Esthetic distancing also made possible the landscape arts and connoisseurship and commercialization as scenery painting, tourism, and recreation. To the credit of the Greeks, they resisted converting the landscape into scenery and wilderness into an aesthetic experience. In the sixteenth century pictorial space was invented by coupling mathematical perspective to painting. Nature itself became a kind of medium for highbrow entertainment, and the pleasure derived would be ruled by artistic theory. The observer moved through life as though in a gallery.

Along with pictorial space and euclidean time, the phonetic alphabet was an inadvertent cause of estrangement. It made words an ultimate reality and the exposition of time linear—beginning with the bookkeeping mentality of the ancient Near East. The Mesopotamian desert-edge agrarians, and their "Persian" heirs of the mind, divided the world into material creation and infinite spirit that would shape the philosophy of the civilized world. Much of what we call "Western" has its roots in Hebrew supernaturalism and Greek hubris, behind which lurks the hieroglyphs of barter.

Elsewhere I have tried to describe history as a crazy idea, fostered not as an intellectual concept so much as the socially sanctioned mutilation of the early childhood experience by blocking what Erik Erikson called "epigenesis," the complicit outcome of inheritance and environment. Through education, history corrupts the intrinsic expectation of prehistory. Young children show natural tendencies that have always been part of the mythic mind as they personalize experience and show an intense interest in the natural world, especially in animals. They cling tenaciously to the proclivities that we try to educate out of them, the natural impulses that are the fundamental source of their creativity. Edith Cobb wisely said of childhood that its "purpose is to discover a world the way the world was made." Children are in tune with that world. We personally experience childhood as a yearning, an intuition of the self, as other selves and other beings, a shadow of plant and animal kindred, vestiges of community that haunt us, and a need for exemplary events as they occur in myth rather than in history.

Most people most of the time in the history of civilization have lived under tyrants and demagogues, cued to despair and hopelessness. Today we are subject to progress, centralized power, entertainment, growth mania, and technophilia that produce their own variety of "quiet desperation." This desperation arises not only from lack of attachment to place but also from lack of kinship with the larger community of all life on earth. History is not a neutral documentation of things that happened but an active, psychological force that separates humankind from the rest of nature because of its disregard for the deep connections to the past. It is a kind of intellectual cannibalism which creates from those different from us a target group that becomes the enemy, upon whom we project our unacknowledged fears and insecurities.

History's judgment of the primitive world is a litany of excuses why we cannot go back: Time is irreversible. There are too many people on earth. Commitment to technology and its social and economic imperatives cannot be overturned. We cannot abdicate our hard-won ethical and moral achievements. Why surrender to a less interesting, cruder, or more wilsome life? History declares independence from origins and from "nature," which is outside the human domain except as materials and the subject of science. Politics that considers our dependence on the health of Planet Earth a moral imperative gives in to the rapacity of self-indulgence and egomania. In Philip Slater's words: "History...is overwhelmingly, even today, a narration of the vicissitudes of, relationships among, and disturbances created by those inflamed with a passion for wealth, power, and fame."

Our Western explorations on this continent—our attitudes and consciousness as depicted in our conquest of the land and its indigenous people and our art—have been influenced by an unacknowledged aspiration lodged deep in our psyches and passed on to us from our European forebears: the search for a lost paradise. This longing for a perfect world may be the greatest motivator of our insatiable desire for the "good life." One wonders whether it is even possible for us to write about the past without a vagrant nostalgia for that perfect world that beckons to us but, so far as we can tell, never existed. History does not resolve our confusion but further misleads us with its mix of dreams and visions, infantile mnemonics, Golden Ages, Christian paradises, escapism, ethnographic misinformation, and fundamentalist attempts to make of it a mythology.

Christopher Lasch gets to the heart of our confusion: the distinctive conception of history is associated with "the promise of universal abundance." Only in the twentieth century did we make "the belated discovery that the earth's ecology will no longer sustain an indefinite expansion of productive forces." The notion that recorded history is an unfolding of human capacities, that we are heirs "to all of the achievements of the past," runs "counter to common sense—that is, to the experience of loss and defeat that makes up so much of the texture of daily life."

Schneidau has told us that myths "do for the group some of the things that dreams do for individuals." Myth and the unconscious are the sources through which we access our numinous past and ease ourselves out of fears and contradictions into "mental patterns that can be dealt with." By discrediting the importance of myth, the ideology of history has corrupted basic human thought processes that have been enriched by myth since we became human. There has been an educated genuflection on the idea of myth since Carl Jung and then Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell attempted to demonstrate that myth is a narrative expression of universal internal archetypes. But, in general, myth has come into ill use and has been depicted as stories that are false, beyond comprehension, or unbelievable. "It is only a myth," we say of stories too fanciful for reality. As a result of this general disrepute, it is difficult for many to credit "factual" history as the new myth of time and progress.

Jean-Paul Sartre argued that the dialectic way of approaching conflicting points of view by thoughtfully resolving contradictions is precisely what distinguishes civilization from the savage world. Sartre's mistake, says Claude Lévi-Strauss, makes him no more sophisticated than a Melanesian native who insists that the only stories that truly explain the world are his own. Lévi-Strauss argues that history is a myth because there is no possibility of recapitulating everything that happened, so history concocts its own story. Moreover, history is not a true sequence. It is fallacious to conceive history as a continuous development beginning with millennia and then going on to centuries, years, and days. These different time frames are separate domains, the larger units characterized by explanation, the smaller by information. As Lévi-Strauss points out, historical thought is analytical and concerned with continuity and "closing gaps and dissolving differences" to the point that it "transcends original discontinuity." In contrast "savage thought is analogical" and its main feature is "timelessness." Lévi-Strauss characterizes the source from which the "savage mind" draws its knowledge as a room with "mirrors fixed on opposite walls, which reflect each other...A multitude of images forms simultaneously, none exactly like any other, so that no single one furnishes more than a partial knowledge...but the group is characterized by invariant properties expressing a truth."

If not to the "historical consciousness" for the truest meaning of life on Planet Earth, then where are we to turn? Perhaps the prehistoric unconscious forms a better basis for the creation of a new history.

Wolfbetan stand as a torchbearer for re-igniting the flames of modern Black Metal. Anti-modern and austere, their vision is based out of transcendent tal moments of the human psyche where humans touch the sacred through the portal of nature. Where self is transported through reverence of the divine in nature and this communion reminds of us the transcendental powers that are forgotten by the ordinary man through the conduit of supreme moments: Standing alone on a mountain top, an icy wind is blowing in your face while snow is falling from a dark and stormy sky; Or atop a mountain at dusk, the silence touches you and the vast lowlands below your feets are covered by fog while you are receiving the last rays of the sun. Further... When on a solitary walk in the forests at night, there is this small clearing and you gaze into the stars and you feel the presence of something that goes beyond ordinary human cognition. This is the realm the fuels Wolfbetan's vision.

Entrückung, their debut cd is an outstanding journey and housed in an equally beautiful Digibook package. Wolfbetan have completed recording for their second full length and are also set to release Entrückung on vinyl, both of which are due out on Eisenwald records later this year. - www.eisenton.de

-Set Sothis Nox La

Wolfbetan formed in 2001 and finally released the debut full length in 2006. Yet there were a few compilation releases in between. Can you describe how Wolfbetan developed and what lead to it's formation?

Yes the band was formed in 2001. Mainly because I was disappointed about the musical, lyrical and spiritual direction the bands went I was part of at that time. I wanted to go in a more spiritual and natural direction conceptionally and more raging, wild and powerful but also atmospheric within the music. So Wolfbetan was basically meant to be a project of mine and I started to search for the right musicians. With Drabcir the guitar player I worked in several bands before and because of his original style of playing it was logical that he joined the band. E.H. was the drummer of Sterbend Besungen the band I joined in late 2001 and I asked him if he was interested and things went on. After the first rehearsals it became obvious that Wolfbetan could grow to something serious and would not be a small project but a real band consisting of three individuals with three different personalities. In 2004 we recorded our debut "Entrückung" in Obscure Infinity studios Eisenach/ Thuringia. After some delays with the layout it got finally released via Irminsul Records in 2006. The music and lyrics on the debut were mainly written by me. So maybe this is the "project"-album. The next album which we started recording in autumn 2007 will be our debut as a band and you definitely can hear that. It will be released sometime in the end of 2008. And we also did one live-gig in September 2003 on an Open Air on a castle.

You have had songs on three compilations "to Mother Earth," the Thüringer Black Metal Sampler, and a NSBM sampler for a defunct website. Can you describe your contributions to these compilations? Specifically To Mother Earth features a demo(?) version of "Pfad der Einsamkeit" Since this was a limited release of 300 copies can you describe it and it's intent?

At first, I didn't know anything about this strange NSBM-sampler before I got your questions and I'm really pissed of about the fact that we are on this compilation. So this was done without our permission and I do absolutely not understand why we are on a NS-compilation. When I look at the bands on it there is no connection with us. Very strange thing. We have nothing to do with that that sampler and with the NSBM-scene in general.

The "To Mother Earth" sampler was done by Taaken from Odal owner of Irminsul Records now Black Devastation Records. It was a kind of support for some German black metal bands he liked and showing respect for mother nature of course as the name suggests. Well, our contribution was a different version of "Pfad der Einsamkeit". It was recorded in January 2003 with quite strange vocals ;-) So this was the first release by Wolfbetan followed by our debut "Entrückung" in 2006. Then there was the "Atrum Toringi" compilation featuring only Black, Death and Thrash Metal bands from Thuringia. We covered "De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas" by Mayhem. It was recorded in march 2004 just before the recording session for "Entrückung". So it was some kind of test recording for the full-length. And there is another sampler where we are featured with the song "Gandreid" from "Entrückung". It was released by Eisenwald some months ago.

The Thüringer comp features a cover of the great De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas by Mayhem. When was this recorded? In some ways it seems a departure from the material on Entrückung, was there a specific reason for this cover?

As I said above it was some kind of test recording. Checking out the equipment and stuff like that. We took this song because we think that "De Mysteriis ..." is the ultimate traditional Black Metal album. It is surely different from the songs from "Entrückung". Maybe not so much musically but if you look at the lyrics and the whole concept it is different. Our whole concept is more based on nature-mysticism and mythological themes and has nothing to do with Satanism. If we speak about the music it's different as when I wrote the music for "Entrückung" I was very much into Mayhem and if we had recorded the songs in 2002 it would maybe have sounded very much like that particular album. But we moved on and we worked with the songs a lot before we recorded them finally. Nowadays I would not do this cover again, because I don't like playing cover songs as it always looks a little bit like `oh we don't have enough own songs and we need something to release´. I think that our music can speak for itself and so we will only release our own songs in the future.

Many of the members have been or are in several other bands. Is there a community of like minded musicians in Thuringia Germany?

At the moment I am the only member in Wolfbetan who works with other bands (Odal and Pestis), but in the past Drabcir and E.H. had some other projects too. We are all thirty years by age and are creating music for more than ten years now. There were a lot of bands we were involved like Bloody Monk, Sterbend Besungen, Legion, Blauer Schnee and Aeon of Fear just to name a few. Maybe you can speak about a special Thuringian metal scene as there are a lot of bands playing good and original music and when you play so long that kind of music you will sooner or later learn to know the other people playing that music. Most of the time it is really great to have that connection. What I absolutely dislike is the fact that sometimes it seems that there are a few people who have some kind of competition between the different bands. Who is playing better than the other and who is more famous. This is absolutely stupid and these guys should play some kind of pop music instead, what they actually already do ;-) Creating music is art and no sport and every musician and band should follow its very own path in creating and not care about other peoples taste.

But all in all there is a lot of support and a good atmosphere between the different bands without bigger stupid conflicts. For example some weeks ago I had a few days trip into the Thuringian Forest with a member from a young Thuringian band called `Helreidh´. That's something I like a lot. Having some mountain trips with good friends, having a fire outside, sharing thoughts on different topics and listen to the voices of the woods.

Can you tell us about your song on the NSBM compilation? It appears to be Sturmwind off a song off Entrücking? How did this comp come about?

How this compilation came about? Maybe there was a person downloading some songs and he or she thought it would be a good thing to do a sampler. But the person forgot to ask some bands for permission. I would never agree to be part of a NS-sampler. We want to emphasize that Wolfhetan is a band that is only concerned with spiritual matters. Our music and lyrics have nothing to do with the world of today and therefore do we not support any political ideas. Also as private persons we do not support or accept any radical political ideas be it fascism, racism, anarchism, national socialism, communism or whatever. We all grew up in Eastern Germany and our childhood was very much affected by the outcome of radical political ideas.

In general there exist in my opinion no satisfying way to live in a mass-society. I was born in 1977, so I spent my childhood under the socialistic tyranny. My hometown was in the 5 km (about 3 mile) Restricted Zone, just next to the border to the BRD. Only the inhabitants of that town could enter it. For the other DDR-inhabitants it was forbidden to enter it, expect some with a permit. So we were in a way imprisoned, though we could visit the DDR .When the Iron curtain fell down I realized very fast that the western democracy is a tyranny based on money and consumption which means that there is only interest in the things that can be exploited. On the other hand there is a deep emptiness and an absence of spiritual and cultural visions. That's one reason why I'm very sceptic to all kinds of mass societies and very careful about politics. Anyway the only solution I see is to live in a small healthy pagan community. It's no solution actually because on the long run the destruction of the earth will go on, till we all die in the Ragnarok, Apocalypse or however you want to call it.

Usually my thoughts and visions are beyond politic categories and usual human recognition. There is a figure created by Ernst Jünger and it's called "Waldgänger". This is a concept I feel quite close to.

Back to this sampler I hope that everyone understands that this was done without our permission and we do absolutely condemn this release. Additionally I think that we made clear now and for all time that we have nothing to do with the NSBM-movement.

Wolfhetan or Ulfhednir were Germanic warriors related to Berzerkers dating from the 7th century, can you give a little background to the name and what it means to you as a personal moniker and over arching band name?

Well as the name Wolfhetan suggests I'm very much interested in the berserker cults and wolf warriors (Wolfhetan: althochdeutsch for He who is wearing a wolf skin). But in contrast to the majority of the Pagan and Black Metal bands who deal with Germanic Paganism I am much more attracted by the magical background and the idea of shapeshifting connected with the name and not in the "mad warrior" aspects. In 2001 I spent several months searching the right name. I studied a lot of old books about Germanic and Celtic Mythology, superstition, old folk belief and such things. After a while I found the name in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's "Deutsche Mythologie" and knew that this was the perfect name. There is also an essay by G. Müller: "Zum Namen Wolfhetan und seinen Verwandten" where you can get a full description of the etymological background of the name. Wolfhetan was a quite common name in the Merovingian rule (about 500-800). But the name is not in use nowadays. That means it is forgotten more or less in contrast to the nowadays still common name "Wolfgang", who has a very strong connection with the wolf warriors too. As far as I remember the first written source was found in a document in the Hessian town Alsfeld dating back to the 7th or 8th century.

Also the strong relationship of the name with Wotan/Odin is of special interest to me. Because the wolf warriors were some kind of model influencing the naming of children. So Wolfhetan is a man consecrated to Wotan in a way.

As personal moniker the name means very much to me. The idea of becoming something else by a magical act like wearing a mask or wearing a wolf-skin or-pelt is really interesting and if you look at the practice of corpse- or war paint it is obvious that it has its roots in these older magical thinking. And that's what shall happen with you when you put the painting or the skin on you. Becoming something else, something which is oppressed in the normal social life. The wild and the archetypical powers find its way and take over the control of your consciousness. The idea of a symbolic ritual transformation where you take over the spirit of the wolf and that you in the last consequence become a wolf while you are wearing a wolf-skin. This is purely magical thinking and for me it's very attracting. The symbol of the wolf intensifies this intention as the wolf has always been like the wood something which lies beyond the human civilisation. A metaphor for the wild and uncontrollable powers, man should be afraid of. The wolf as the personification of the wild rage and also the criminal who shall be banned out of human society into the forest as place of the unknown. On the other hand it became a symbol of infinite freedom as the forest became an asylum for the pariahs and outlaws. A place of refuge for persons who are not "normal" and different from the common humans. Also if you look into the fairytales and myths you can always find these subjects.

As the band was first meant to be a project I found it natural to use my personal moniker as the name for it. But as Wolfhetan developed into a band where everyone has equal rights the name became and still is a little bit confusing. Because a lot of people think that it would be a solo-project of mine which is absolutely not right. Just think that for the second album, Drahcir wrote 2/3 of the music and E.H. wrote all the lyrics. So I'm not even the person who contributes the most any more ;-)

Wolfhetan are concerned with spiritual matters can you give a list of important authors or books that inspire you?

Well when I wrote the lyrics for Entrückung I was very much into old German folk belief, superstitions and myths, Germanic and Celtic paganism in general and some romantic poetry of our region from the 18th and 19th century. For example the lyrics for the song "Sturmwind" are very much influenced by a poem from a writer called Ludwig Storch. But most of the lyrics were, as the music, done while or after I had a trip into the forests or mountains. This is definitely the greatest source of inspiration for the band. So special places out in the woods and up in the mountains are very important for us. Places and moods that touch your "heart" in a way. So that you can feel states of the higher consciousness that lie beyond normal daily experiences. Moments that have the potential to open the gates to another world. To say it another way I don't think that special books or writers have a direct influence on the music or lyrics of Wolfhetan

expect "Sturmwind" of course and the basic idea behind the title track. But for us are certain experiences that are closed for most humans more important. Not easy to explain but it must be like a sense of the transcendental powers that are forgotten by the ordinary man.

But for me as person there are a lot of quite different writers and books I find interesting for various reasons. I don't have some kind of paragon because I don't want to live my life after a role model, but trying to find and walk my very own path. But of course there were and are different authors, painters and ideas that influenced me in one way or another. So there are Ernst Jünger (the figure of "Waldgänger"), Theodor W. Adorno "Dialectic of Enlightenment", Ulrich Beck, Caspar David Friedrich, Rudolf Steiner, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Carl Gustav Jung, Theodor Kittelsen, Friedrich Nietzsche (the figure of "Zarathustra"), Hugo Höppener (Fidus), Julius Evola, Knut Hamsun with all their ambivalences of course. But these artists were/ are surely important companions to find my very own path. As it is my personal conviction, that every human being has to find and walk its very own path and this path is in all consequence a solitary path.

There were some other writings that inspired me in one way or another as "Deutsche Mythologie" by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "The Rhinegold" and "Attila's Treasure" by Stephan Grundy, "Silmarillion" by J.R.R. Tolkien,"The One-Eyed God: Odin and the Indo-Germanic Männerbünde" by Kris Kershaw,"Naturgeister" by Spiesberger, "Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens" by Bächtold-Stäubli and lots more. But I think that it's more important to listen carefully to your inner voice instead reading a lot of books.

How much do Myths and Germanic mythology in particular play in the lyrics of Wolfhetan? Do you think of your music like Helrunar where it pursues mythology as a basis for the spiritual quest in the music? Or do you consider the lyrics to be more about a personal association with Nature, as in standing on a mountain top and feeling the transcendental relationship with the divine in nature?

I think both parts are presented in Wolfhetan. Maybe the focus is more on the last topic as I stated somewhere else that I like to compare our music with special situations and moods. Like standing alone on a mountain top, an icy wind is blowing in your face while snow is falling from a dark and stormy sky or another situation on that top at dusk, the silence touches you almost and the vast lowlands below your feet's are covered by fog while you are receiving the last rays of the sun. Everything is concerned about the presence of something that goes beyond the ordinary human cognition. A sense of the transcendental powers that are forgotten by the ordinary man. But the basis or the setting is often connected with the Germanic and/or Celtic Mythology.

As already mentioned I'm probably mostly interested in the spiritual aspects of Germanic and Celtic Paganism and their effects on the old Germanic folk belief. That means the nature magical thinking, rites, the shapeshifting and the wild hunt. That means I'm not so concerned about swords- and mead-drinking stories like most of the Pagan Metal bands seem to be. It's more like an individual feeling of connection between me and the Germanic and Celtic ancestors who settled in this area. So it's not like if I would take part in re-enactment groups wearing clothes and weapons like maybe the Germanic tribes did. It's more on an inner level of being rooted in it and carrying the flame in this disgusting modern or post-modern world with its lack of transcendence and higher values.

At this point I think we should go a little bit deeper into the lyrical concept that stands behind "Entrückung". Usually I don't like explaining the lyrics, because there are so many different ways to read them and every listener should use his/her own phantasy but I will try to keep it on a more general but still on a profound level. As the title "Entrueckung" suggests we want to take the listener with us on a journey. At the same time it is a kind of initiation. Coming from the ordinary world and going over into the spirit world or the so called "Otherworld" if we take the Celtic term. These ecstatic journeys are meant as a spiritual transformation that shall take place while listening to the album. This process has different steps.

1. The first song "Sturmwind" is about an awakening through the forces of nature and a voice echoing from a long forgotten era. The forces of nature, that means here the storm is a metaphor for the wild hunt and the voice could be the voice of Wotan. But it can also be your inner struggle and your inner voice of course trying to awake you out of your mechanized existence.
2. The lyric to "Pfad der Einsamkeit" is the main key to the album. It is about walking the solitary, dangerous and overgrown path that lead to the higher consciousness and transformation. The act of climbing works as metaphor for the individual spiritual quest if you want and to speak with Evola too. As the song lyric shows, this solitary path can lead you to the mountain top as symbol of salvation, wisdom and freedom. At the same time you sense the forces of nature: fire and ice, rain and storm.
3. The scenery of "Gandreid" is the night. It is about the meeting with yourself and the fear of death and how to overcome this fear. The leaving of the mortal coil and as the soul is reaching the higher levels. In older Germanic traditions and superstition the gandreid was a magical journey in different shape or as ghost. A journey of the soul free from the chains of the body. It is also the origin of the witch's-ride.
4. In "Entrückung" the individual is entering another world beyond time and space. In this special place in the "Otherworld" the person reaches the final wisdom and becomes one with the primeval unity. Well the lyric was certainly very much influenced by the Entrückung-superstition. As we have two different meanings of that particular theme I have to stress that in this context we talk about the Germanic origin not the christian. Basicallo it is the idea that some special persons become abducted and have to live inside mountains. We have a very famous myth here about Friedrich Barbarossa who shall live inside the Kyffhäuser-mountain and who waits until he returns into the "real" world again.

Are you familiar with Ludwig Tieck the German Romantic writer? His Der Runenberg seems fairly close to your lyrics in general.

I know some writers from the romantic period of course (Novalis, Grimm's brothers etc.) and I can say that it is one of my favourite periods if we talk about arts. Sorry but I don't know "Der Runenberg" but if there are similarities I have to check it out of course.

Are you familiar with any of the George circle authors? Wolfskehl, Alfred Schuler, Ludwig Klages? Any interest in their work?

Well, I think Ludwig Klages essay "Mensch und Erde" (1913) is some kind of prophetical writing as he already at this time saw, that the so called "progress" leads in all consequence to the destruction of the earth. Under the pretext of modern rationality the variety of life becomes more and more destroyed, which leads in the end to the self-corrosion of that which in fact makes us human. It's notable how up to date these thoughts are. That he wrote that for the meeting on the "Hohen Meissner" is a sign how much interrelated the different groups of the so called "Lebensreform"-movement have been.

The two others you mentioned I only know by name, but I think especially Schuler seems to be a quite interesting and obscure character worth to go deeper into his works.

Are you familiar with the poem by Stefan George entitled "Entrueckung?" (see below) In some ways it is very close in spirit with some of the themes you have mentioned for the personal spiritual associations of which are evoked by the music.

I didn't know the poem by George when I wrote the lyrics for "Entrückung". I found it for three or four years ago and at first I thought there were no similarities because our "Entrückung" was mainly influenced by the older folk belief, while Georges work is much more original and romantic and his language is much more elaborated of course. Nowadays I see more similar themes and metaphors, especially the longing and the consciousness about the divine powers in nature and the human itself. Maybe there are even more similarities with the lyric to "Pfad der Einsamkeit" as with "Entrückung" I would say.

Entrückung

By **Stefan George** (1907)

Ich fühle luft von anderem planeten.
Mir blassen durch das dunkel die gesichter
Die freundlich eben noch sich zu mir drehten.

Und bäum und wege die ich liebte fahlen
Dass ich sie kaum mehr kenne und Du lichter
Geliebter schatten – rufer meiner qualen –

Bist nun erloschen ganz in tiefern gluten
Um nach dem taumel streitenden getobes
Mit einem frommen schauer anzumuten.

Ich löse mich in tönen . kreisend . webend .
Ungründigen danks und unbenamten lobes
Dem grossen atem wunschlos mich ergebend.

Mich überfährt ein ungestümes wehen
Im rausch der weihe wo inbrünstige schreie
In staub geworfner beterinnen flehen:

Dann seh ich wie sich duftige nebel küpfen
In einer sonnerfüllten klaren freie
Die nur umfängt auf fernsten bergesschlüpfen.

Der boden schüttere weiss und weich wie wolke . .
Ich steige über schluchten ungeheuer .
Ich fühle wie ich über lezter wolke

In einem meer kristallnen glanzes schwimme –
Ich bin ein funke nur vom heiligen feuer
Ich bin ein dröhnen nur der heiligen stimme.

Transport

(Translated by Ernst Morwitz and Carol North Valhope)

I feel an air from other planets flowing,
In darkness faces pale upon my sight
That even now had turned on me their glowing.

And trees and paths I loved in greyness languish,
So that I hardly know them, and your light,
Beloved shadow –bidder of my anguish.

In deeper blazes now is wholly blended
To touch with blest and tremulous amaze,
When frenzy of chaotic strife is ended.

In music I am melted, circling, wreathing,
Of thanks unfathomed and unbounded praise,
Surrendered wishless to the mighty breathing.

Now I am shaken as with tempest soaring
In sacred rapture where with frantic screams
The fervent sink into the dust, imploring.

Then I behold how bloomy mist disperses
In limpid space suffused with sunny beams
That only on the furthest peaks immerses.

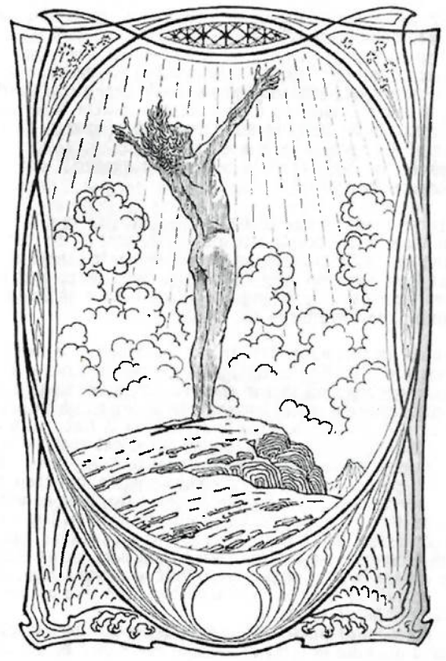
As soft and white as whey the ground is shifted
Across enormous chasms high and higher,
I feel how over last of clouds uplifted

In seas of crystal radiance I am swung.
I only am a spark of holy fire,
A thunder only of the holy tongue!

Any interests in the German Naturalists like Fidus and Ludwig Fahrenkrog, or others that formed the GGG and related groups in the early 1900's? There seems to be a similar aesthetic, especially in the reverential facing of nature. Are you familiar with the Finnish artist Akseli Gallen-Kallela?

The whole "Lebensreform"-movement at the turn of the 19./20. century I find really inspiring. There were so many different ideas and experiments coming up at this time. All united by the protest against the standardisation of the mass-society, some kind of "revolt against the modern world". And it was not only protest but also the will to change things. There was one movement I really appreciate and that was the "Wandervogel". They had one central ethos and it was like "deliver yourself, take the walking staff and search out in the nature the man you have lost, the rooted and natural". This is a motto I totally can support as I think the human has deeply lost its roots to nature and the real human basic. Something you can call estrangement from nature. Because most of the humans, at least in the western civilisation, live in man-made plastic surroundings without any contact with the primary natural forces. For me personally it's not understandable at all because when I am alone out in unspoilt nature it is the only place where I really feel comfortable.

I like Fidus very much and if we take his most successful drawing "Lichtgebet" we can go directly to the final line of "Pfad der Einsamkeit". A man who is standing on a mountainpeak. And how he spreads his arms to embrace the forces of nature and as he gets touched by the transcendental eternal powers through the last rays of the sun. "Lichtgebet" is really beautiful and it fits so much with the lyrics that we could have taken it as illustration for the CD.



As far as I know Akseli Gallen-Kallela was the painter who illustrated the finish epos Kalevala and you can draw a line to the (national)romantic movement that was spreading over whole Europe in the 19. century. There are a lot of great artists that are really recommendable. Maybe this sounds like a cliché but the most interesting painters from this period are for me Theodor Kittelsen and Caspar David Friedrich.

You mention that you are also interested in Neofolk music, specifically bands like Tenhi. What do you think about the cross over of Paganism/Heathenism between the different scenes? Any thoughts about Heathenism and modern Germany? Do you have any attraction of Satanism? Any thoughts about "Orthodox Black Metal?"

Yes I'm very much into stuff like Neofolk, that means Tenhi, Of the Wand and the Moon, Empyrium, Forseti, L'Orchestre Noir etc., but also traditional Scandinavian Folk music and songwriters, some classical stuff and some older original Death Metal bands like Bolt Thrower or Morbid Angel. I like every kind of music that can touch a certain string in my heart. And what kind of music one find appealing depends on the mood of course. At this point I have to stress that I see three ways to have a look into the other world. The first one is to have some kind of meditation out on special places in the wilderness. I think a lot of people know such places where the (post)modern world has no relevance at all and where you can get a really deep connection with the forgotten arcane forces of nature and so with yourself. The second one is the world of dreams. The last one is by the magical power of arts and especially music. Three years ago I was visiting a small wooden church in Norway at the Hardangerfjord. The orchestra and choir from the University of Bergen were doing a concert there. It was a really great atmosphere with all the snow outside and this small dark room inside the church. The orchestra started to play and suddenly from above the choir began to sing in such an unearthly beautiful way that everything around me started to tremble and I really felt like being taken away to somewhere beyond.

I think the Neofolk-scene is one of the most interesting scenes you can find nowadays. Because there you have really beautiful music, really dedicated and intelligent artists both in writing music and working with a serious concept based on traditions and spirit. I think that there should be much more cooperation between the seriously dedicated metalbands dealing with for example pagan spirituality and in this context the much more elaborated Neofolkscene. This could be very inspiring and it already happens if we look at bands like Negura Bunget for example.

Thoughts about Heathenism in modern Germany, well this is a difficult question. As you can imagine most of the people here are, as the rest of the western civilisation, living a pointless and empty life as consumption-slaves only interested in superficial material things. But there certainly exist individuals and groups that strive for a more natural and in a way "real" life. Searching for different ways of living and who do not take part in the meaningless life-style of the masses.

If we take Heathenism in Germany there is one big problem. I would call it the misuse of the Germanic and Celtic heritage by the Nazis. That's the reason why a lot of superficial fuckheads condemn all that is connected with Germanic origin and tradition. So in a way there exists a moral barricade to be interested in your own mythology and the living of your own ancestors. This is something I find really annoying and I hope that we one day will be free from this stupid curse and that we can be proud of our rich and inspiring mythology without being called a Nazi. Surely there exist a lot of right-wing-groups who misuse the Germanic symbols again, but there exist groups who misuse the christian symbols for their racistic purpose too. But no one attacks the christian religion in general for being racistic. Especially the extreme left seem not to be able to distinguish between things which leads to annoying accusations against almost all bands who deal with Germanic paganism. They do not have a clue about that particular matter and they are caught in their own radical black or white categories not able to question the whole topic because of their lack of knowledge. And they are in general caught in the (post)modern material world of course.
But all in all there are a lot of interesting groups connected with Germanic heathenism nowadays and I see a growing interest in these subjects also by the so called normal people.

Satanism. hmm... as probably everybody searching for different paths than the mainstream I was also interested in Satanism more than ten years ago. But it was only a step on my spiritual development and I went on to a more balanced kind of philosophy. Satanism as I see it is focusing only on dark and negative aspects and to live your life fully one needs to have a balance and that includes the light as much as the darkness. But this is still dualistic christian thinking with black or white, good or evil and so on. The older traditions do not know this clear simple moral categories and antagonisms. In paganism this is all part of the whole and it is important to accept and fully live all aspects of one's personality. So in my opinion Satanism is just as one-dimensional as christian belief is and where it derives from too. Here focusing on the dark side and leading you into self-destruction when you do it consequent. But this is only my personal view and to generalize Satanism is very problematic and I'm not the right person to speak about Satanism anyway.

Orthodox Black Metal, well it's their way of refusing this modern world and so I can accept it. It's not my way but if these people are true to themselves then it's okay for me.

Do you have many associations with the Crust Punk community? In America most of the scenes are fairly interrelated, but I have not heard that about the scene in Germany and Europe in general, any thoughts?

Basically I have to say that I don't care about any musical categories at all. Because I don't like the usual artificial scene discussions and the stupid categories and limitations usually connected with that.

Well I listened to some crust bands in the beginning of the 90ties namely Discharge, Crude S.S. and Extreme Noise Terror. No I have no connection with this scene. I even have no idea what is going on in that scene and what kind of values or ideas stand behind it. I don't care either, because I think it's quite far from my views expect the rejection of the capitalistic system.

I have seen that all scenes in the states are interrelated. For us it looks a little bit strange to see a zine dealing with hardcore, death metal, rock, nsbm punk, black metal at the same time. It looks a little bit arbitrary then and so typical postmodern. On the other hand it is good in showing the "normal" people that there is a will to be different and to question the values of the western civilisation. At least I hope that this is the basic intention in being part of a "scene".

So I see no deeper connections between the different scenes here in Germany and I think it's okay because there are far too different values and aesthetics the different scenes stand for. The scenes here are only mixing each other if they fit together more or less.

There are no lyrics in the beautifully packaged cd. Was this intentional to encourage the listener towards the personal journey hinted at by the title of the release? What is the status of Trimonsul records? Were you involved with the label at all?

There is the final line of "Pfad der Einsamkeit" on the first and the last page of the booklet and as I already have written this is the mainkey to the lyrics of the album. We didn't want to print all the lyrics because we want to break with the normal pattern including either all the lyrics or no lyrics at all. On the other hand everyone can write me and ask for the lyrics. I have even tried to translate them into English but this is not that easy, because some lyrics are written in some kind of older German. That means that some phrases are in the vein of nationalromantic writings of the 18./19. century and it's already difficult to translate it into nowadays German.

You are surely right that we want that our listener shall use his/her own phantasy because there are so many different ways to interpret the lyrics. I think for every individual they can mean something totally different and be important in

the way they understand it. I see it even with my bandmates. E.H. has a quite different interpretation of the lyrics than I have and this is fine for me. Everyone shall find the meaning he/she is looking for and use the own brain. This is also an example that the key to understand lies hidden in every human itself.

By the way I don't think that there is a really fitting English equivalent to the German word "Entrückung". In the sense we use it it means less some kind of transport as the George poem seems to be. It is more some kind of abduction by the arcane forces of nature and then to live inside the mountains and to learn and to grow there till you maybe come back to the "real" world again. So it's neither some kind of transport (At least this is not fitting 100%) nor what in English is called "rapture" (this is the christian meaning).

Irminsul Records were responsible for the promotion and distribution of the album. We paid all by ourselves and gave only the CD`s to Taaken and he sent it to some zines and other distributors. I think he did a great a job for us.

I have heard that Eisenwald records www.Eisenton.de is going to release an lp version of Entrucking? Is this true? Will it coincide with the new lp?

As Irminsul Records ceased to exist we got some different offers from other labels and distributors and as Eisenwald Records is coming from the same town as our rehearsalplace and because Nico is doing a good job in promoting his bands it came natural to us to work together with him. We meet each other quite often for going for a walk, having a beer and such things. This is really important for us. His first thing will be the LP-version of Entrueckung and then we will see what happens. The LP will include a new song that will only be on this LP and this 10 minute monster will work as some kind of link between the first album and the second one.

Can you give us a sample of some of the lyrics and musical style of the new release? Will there be as elaborate 12 minute songs like on Entrücking?

Well we started to record our second album in the end of last year and are still working with it. We have material that lasts about 80 minutes including the song for the Entrückung LP. The new compositions are more complex and even more epic and we think that we have found our very own style with them. The next album will contain five long and epic songs, one classical guitar based instrumental and a really great bombastic outro (no keyboards ;-). Once again we will let some guest musicians be part of the album. Until now we have asked a talented cellist who will play on some parts on it. The musical style will not be so different from "Entrückung" although it will include a broader range of different atmospheres and will be more varied. When you listen to our first album you hear that it is very much influenced by Norwegian Black Metal. The new record will be much more original and as we are open for other musical expressions too you can hear a lot of different musical influences on it. If you think the title track of the first album was the best you definitely will love the new record as we have worked out our epic vein so to speak. This was not done on purpose it just happened that we never were satisfied with a song. We were thinking like `oh this is not enough there must come something more` and if you see how much time we spend writing and then rehearsing the songs it's obvious that the songs turned out the way they finally are. The music for the next album was already written between 2002 and 2004. So we spend all the time working them out and experimentating with different speeds and stuff like that. I think the result justifies the long time of preparation. But every listener can judge this in the end of 2008. By the way there were also some other reasons for the long delay. In 2005 I spend a half year in Norway. In the beginning of 2006 our drummer became some serious problems with his feet's that lasted some month. Then he had an accident at work, crushing one finger and last but not least we lost our rehearsalplace. But that's life...

Well, as the lyrics are now completely written by E.H. it's obvious that they are different. As I read his lyrics they are much more personal and philosophical. I had no inspiration for the lyrics and all I had to say was done with the first record too. Maybe I will write some lyrics for our third record again as we already have finished about 30 minutes of music for the next album. I hope it will not take that long till we record them as with our second one ;-)
Thanks a lot for your really interesting and inspiring questions.

Sturmwind

Wie ein Schatten aus dem Jenseits
Ein Sturm entfacht, voll dunkler Kraft
Jagt vorbei, in des Mondes Glanz
Um des Gebirges Kranz, in wilder Hast

Eine Geisterschwinge aus der Vergessenheit
In dieser kalten verzauberten Winternacht
Wo alles Leben, gefesselt und stumm
Nur aus des Berges Schoß bricht hervor des Sturmes Wut

Eine Stimme der Vergangenheit mir tief in die Seele greift
Mir tief in die Seele greift

Hörst du den Sturmwind, die Klage der Seel
fühlst du den kalten Hauch der Ewigkeit

Spürst du des Sturmwinds Macht

Text geschrieben von Wolfhetan im August 2002

Stormwind/ or Gale

Like a shadow from beyond
a storm unleashed, full of dark power
hunting past in the glow of the moon
'round the mountains' wreath in wild haste

a ghost swing out of oblivion
in this cold enchanted winter night
where all life is bound up and silent
only out of the mountain's womb out breaks
the fury of the storm

a voice from the past calls deep into my soul
calls deep into my soul

do you hear the stormwind,
the sorrow of the soul

do you feel the cold breath of eternity

Do you sense the power of the stormwind?

Pfad der Einsamkeit

Nebel liegt über dem Land
Du fühlst dich verloren
In seiner kalten Umarmung
Die deine Seele erfriert
Einsamer Wanderer im kargen Tal des Lebens
Folge den vergessenen Wegen
Die dich aus der Verzweiflung führn

Hoch oben, wo die Ewigkeit so nah
In alten Wäldern, wo man die Sterblichen
niemals sah
Ein vergessenes Reich, geboren aus Feuer und
Eis

Feuer und Eis

Hoch oben, wo die Ewigkeit so nah
In alten Wäldern, wo man die Sterblichen
niemals sah
Ein vergessenes Reich, geboren aus Feuer und
Eis

Steige empor
Den Pfad der Einsamkeit
Zu des Berges sturmgepeitschter Höh
Wo nur du und die Ewigkeit
Lass dich treiben, wie auf Adlers Schwingen
gleiten

Text geschrieben von Wolfhetan im Juli und
August 2002

Path of Solitude

Fog covers the land
You feel lost
In its cold embrace
That is freezing your soul
Solitary wanderer in the mournful valley of
life
Follow the overgrown path
That guides you out of desperation

High above, where eternity is near
In old woods where no mortal was ever seen
A forgotten empire born out of fire and ice

Fire and ice

High above, where eternity is near
In old woods where no mortal was ever seen
A forgotten empire born out of fire and ice

Ascend
On the path of solitude
To the storm-whipped heights of the peak
Where only you and eternity are
Release yourself, glide as on eagle-Bs wings

Gandreid

Wenn die Nacht ihren dunklen Schleier
Über die alten Wälder legt
Stille und Einsamkeit herrscht
Unter des Nachthimmels majestätischer Kraft

In des Schlafes erdrückender Macht
Ich gleite in des Traumes Schoß
Die Seele frei von des Leibes Band
Leibes Band

So schwebe ich dahin
Mit dem Wind über Berg und Wald
In die Stille der Ewigkeit
So einsam, so kalt
Im Wehen
Unter dem Schatten der alten Wälder
Ich meine Befreiung fand

Text geschrieben von Wolfthetan im August 2002

Entrückung

Ein Schrei die Stille der Nacht zerreist
Wo der eisige Wind die Verzweiflung preist
Des Frostes Atem alles Leben gefriert
Ein verwunschener Pfad in die Ewigkeit führt

Eine einsame Lichtung, verborgen im Wald
Bedeckt von Schnee, spiegelnd des Mondes
Schein
Die Sterne funkeln, an des Himmels Gewand
Und kalte Winde künden von einem anderen Sein

Dort ein Feuer an des Himmels Rand
Wurde ich an den Berg gebannt

Ein Schrei die Stille der Nacht zerreist
Wo der eisige Wind die Verzweiflung preist
Dort ein Feuer an des Himmels Rand
Wurde ich an den Berg gebannt
An den Berg gebannt

Hinter der Sterblichen Verstand
In alten Wäldern der Macht
Jenseits des Nebels Gewand
Des Eises ewiger Kraft

weit oben auf des Berges Höhn
wo Regen und Sturm treiben empor
im Reich der Unendlichkeit
erwartet er die Wiederkehr

hoch auf des Todes Thron
jenseits der Zeit in Ewigkeit
im Reich der Unendlichkeit
erwartet er die Wiederkehr

Texte geschrieben von Wolfthetan im Februar 2003

Gandreid

When the night covers the ancient woods with
Her dark veil
Silence and solitude reign
Under the nightsky's majestic might

In the astral power of sleep
I glide into the realm of dream
The soul free from this mortal coil
Mortal coil

As i drift away
With the wind over mountain and wood
Into the silence of eternity
So alone, so cold
In the blowing of the wind
Under the shadows of the old woods
I found my liberation

Entrückung - Spellbound or Abduction

A scream tears apart the silent night
Where the icy wind praises despair
the breath of frost freezes all live
an forgotten path leading to eternity

A solitary clearing, hidden in the forest
covered with snow, reflecting the moonlight
the stars sparkling in the nocturnal firmament
and cold winds calking from another world

There-Bs a fire at the sky's edge
I was taken to the mountain

A scream tears apart the silent night
where the icy wind praises despair
There-Bs a fire at the sky's edge
I was taken to the mountain
taken to the mountain

Beyond the mortals' imagination
in old woods of might
Beyond the garment of the fog
the eternal strength of ice

High up on the mountaintop
where rain and storm is raging
In the realm of infinity
he awaits the return

High up upon the throne of death
beyond time in eternity
In the realm of infinity
he awaits the return

Translations Wolfthetan et Markus Wolff

Procer Benefícus

You have selected the moniker Procer Beneficus. Could you please illumine us as to the meaning(s) of this phrase (general and/or personal)? Why have you chosen these words as the container for your endeavor?

The name Procer Beneficus has changed in meaning over time. It has its roots, like my music itself, in black metal. The phrase was originally conceived in meaning "The Venomous Prince," a term which for me calls forth associations with the forest, alchemy, power plants, and sorcery in general. For me most of the power of black metal is in its poignant connection with what many would call the "supernatural," which is really just an umbrella term for the various frontiers of our consciousness or our understanding of the world as humans. Names are interesting things: they can hold power and depth of meaning, yet they are also meaningless in that they are only referential – they are the guardians of our "sanity," mental avatars imposed upon reality by our oh-so-symbolic minds in order to construct the reasonable out of the formless. I feel that my music is formless and cannot rightly be captured by a name (and I believe that this is a characteristic of all things). Unfortunately our culture isn't set up to properly handle and process things which are formless, so a name is a limitation which I have to accept... at least in this context.

You weave imaginal worlds with your song titles, often conjuring new word forms and meanings with conjunctive recombinations of evocative words and phrases. Do you have the sense that this brings you closer to conjoining reason and formlessness, or is this simply a limitation necessary within the current paradigm? Would your ideal release be entirely free of words?

Your description of my literary technique is quite accurate. It's something which I was originally turned on to by various authors whom I favor – mostly the beat writers. The idea that this technique can effectively "weave imaginal worlds" is very pleasing for me to hear, because that is exactly its intent: I am in many respects a visual person, and music has always been a visual thing for me. I think song titles can guide the listener's mind in a particular direction – in this way words can enhance the experience of the music. Of course, this is a fragile sort of power, and the atmospheres evoked by music will always be highly subjective in nature. As for my albums: I would not say that my ideal release would be free of words. My releases have all been very close to ideal so far, and I voluntarily chose to create song and album titles for most of them. I am very enamored with the atmospheric power of words, and this power has become an integral part of Procer Beneficus. However, I do not believe that this use of words brings me any closer to reconciling the reasonable with the formless; I believe that is an impossible task by definition. All things are both reasonable and formless simultaneously – I would say that the difference is in our eyes only. The real task is not one of reconciliation, but of learning to see.

Do you have any thoughts about why humanity has become so absorbed in the rational? Were we better off before the advent of such a highly conceptualized understanding of experience? If the real task is in learning to see, what is it that remains veiled?

I am relatively uncertain about the answer to this question. I believe that the rational and the reasonable are related directly to the development of the ego, and are probably also linked to the ever-present instinct to survival, which we possess. However, viewing the world in a systematically symbolic (i.e., reasonable) manner doesn't necessarily exclude the irrational (formless, unreasonable, etc.) from one's worldview. Why our culture has developed an almost exclusively reason-focused worldview I cannot say. I certainly believe we would be better off if we examined both aspects of reality. You mention an "advent" of this exclusively reasonable type of thinking, however, and I'm really not sure what point in time it is that you're referencing. Since I haven't been present for all of human evolution I don't want to make any assumptions about when or how this type of thinking "developed." As for learning to see: what I am referring to here is learning to view the world as both reasonable and formless, simultaneously. We have conceptions and definitions of the things around us, but if we allow ourselves to abandon those narrow conceptions, we are left in a world which is totally abstract, formless, and (potentially) infinitely powerful.

You are describing a process similar to the enlightenment experience central to Buddhism. Is your work influenced by Eastern philosophies or spiritual traditions?

My knowledge of Eastern religions is only cursory. My studies have taken me there from time to time, but unfortunately never in any great depth. I have looked over ancient Vedic sacrificial ritual structures and various Buddhist sutras (most recently The Flower Ornament scripture, which is carved in ancient rock at Xiangtangshan Cave in China). Truly I feel that all religions of Earth are one and the same in essence; they vary only in details and dogma according to the peoples who practiced them over the centuries. I've been told by a few more knowledgeable than myself that my outlook on reality is close to that of the Taoists, and from what I know this comparison makes sense to me. Overall though I'd say that spirituality and philosophy are highly personal realms, and each person ultimately forms their own cosmology regardless of the religious tradition to which they subscribe. Mine is informed by not only Eastern thought but also South American sorcery, the religious beliefs of ancient Scandinavia, old European alchemy, current-day chaos magic, and so forth. I guess in a sense religion is becoming a rather postmodern thing; we can simply borrow and steal from whatever traditions we like to form a world that makes sense to each of us.

Earlier in our conversation you spoke of the spiritual dimensions of black metal as having meaning for you. Do you here refer to Satanism, which some claim as the sole spiritual thrust of "authentic" black metal? Or perhaps the atavistic resurgence of autochthonous spiritual forms such as paganism and pantheism seen in some purveyors of the genre? What defines the spiritual essence of black metal for you, and how/why has this taken its place in your variegated personal cosmology?

I believe what I mentioned specifically is that for me, black metal is connected with the supernatural – the fringes of our reality as everyday human beings. First let me clarify, however, exactly which music I'm speaking about. It seems to me that black metal as a genre has developed in two primary directions: the crusty, hard-edge, thrash-derived form which you see to this day in old giants like Darkthrone (and all of their countless current followers), and the meditative, hypnotic, melancholic form derived almost exclusively from Burzum's final two black metal records. Often these two forms refuse to be reconciled with one another, and while I have love for both of them, the music I'm really talking about here is that of the latter camp; when I say "black metal" in this context, I'm really referring to this particular strain of black metal. Anyway – to continue – this music for me has always served as a sort of ritual music; something which has enough power to open doorways beyond the stars and deep below the Earth. It is functional music. It serves a purpose, and that purpose is to shift our awareness away from that of the everyday world and into that of the unknown, the illogical, the mysterious – strange worlds of dreams and visions. The phrase "trance-inducing" has become cliché and grossly mis- (and over-) used, but it's the proper term here. Personally I feel that religious structures such as Satanism and atavistic returns to "pagan" religions are insufficient, narrow, and ultimately pointless. However, to each his own. For me, black metal is sorceric music; the magic I hear in black metal is the same magic I feel when I stand atop a mountain in the deserts of the American Southwest, or when I stare up into the stars at night, or when I'm canoeing deep in the fog. It's born of the same stuff that fueled the imaginations of writers like H.P. Lovecraft and Ray Bradbury. It's a deep and eerie and sorrowful and lonely sort of music – but it's not morbid. Too many people fixate on that sorrow. The music is tapping into something eternal and deeply human, and it reveals to us on a visceral level our ultimate smallness and solitude. I think it's easy for that feeling to get blown out of proportion, and get distorted into the typical soul-sickness and nihilism you see in a lot of black metal. Which, in my eyes, is unfortunate

There does seem to be an increasing number of individuals and projects that are approaching black metal with an intention to move beyond nihilism. How do you see Procer Beneficus in relationship to this?

I think that I've been influenced by these bands which you're mentioning, and hopefully I'm contributing to this change. Most of my early influences within the metal genre (not black metal) were somehow socially or spiritually aware, and this spoke to me and influenced me. From the beginning, Procer Beneficus was a spiritual concept. I am glad things are moving in this direction. The "satanism" or nihilism evident in much black metal is, frankly, childish. I understand the need for catharsis (or magical aesthetic experience, or whatever you'd like to term it), but this can be achieved without silly half-baked philosophies. The power is in the soul

of the sound, not in the ideology; so, if we've managed to accomplish the magic in the sound, then why not turn toward a more intelligent, aware ideology? I'm pleased to see black metal musicians becoming aware of their shared traits with the old anarcho / crust punk bands, or with deeper spiritual and ecological traditions. We are living in extremely dire times in the history of the human race and the Earth as a whole. We need music which is thoughtful and channels its anger to productivity rather than music which wallows in nihilism and self-loathing. It's very hard to escape these dark forces in our society, and if there are any methods to fight against them we ought to implement them.

You recently took the step of dismantling the Procer Beneficus Myspace profile. The website (www.procerveneficus.com) has also gone offline. You are here moving antithetically to the culture at large, and in a real sense limiting your potential for notoriety and success as an artist. Does your disappearance from the Internet represent a purificatory purge on your part, an effort to disentangle Procer Beneficus from the virtual? Or is it something else? What were the motivations that contributed to this decision?

To me, the idea of success as an artist is actually measured by how well my creations live up to what's inside my head. An ideal world would simply support the existence of artists as a given, but seeing as things are the way they are, artists are forced to think about marketing and selling their "products". It's a disgusting cheapening of the entire creative process. This is, basically, where the internet comes into the picture. Although in some ways it has great potential as a means of communication and a forum for free exchange of knowledge / data, in most ways it has been sadly steered by the corporations toward becoming another ad-infested consumer playground, much like any other aspect of our dying (dead?) culture. The reason I eliminated the myspace (and I am urging others to do so as well) is due to the fact that they are owned by NewsCorp, a Rupert Murdoch company – a group which has ties to the successful efforts to scam Bush Junior into office, among other things. Simply put, I'd rather not host any of my music on a website which supports fascist regimes, let alone floods viewers with incessant, inane advertisements. As for my personal website, the reasons are perhaps less than pure – a big part of it is the financial dilemma – but I'm thinking of it as an experiment for now. Society currently demands that we all have an internet presence of some sort; if you don't have it, you're left behind. Can I make this work and still feel fulfilled as a musician? I'd like to hope so, and I think so.

Many people are now saying that a Black Metal movement exists in the Cascadian bioregion which is unique, particularly in the manner in which many projects exhibit an earth-based spiritual consciousness. Procer Beneficus, in contradistinction to other well-known bands from this area, seems more drawn to the stars, prioritizing spectral rather than chthonic imagery. How do you see the connection between your work and Earth?

Dreams, visions, outer space, and Earth. Yes, I certainly do tend to look upward, outward, toward the miraculous void which is our home and which mirrors our minds and souls. However, the Earth has always been part of my core. I grew up by the oceanside in a small back-bay town. I've written many songs down by that bay, sitting in the Eucalyptus tree, watching the fog roll in and the birds hunting for fish. I've spent many days and nights wandering through the redwood forests in Santa Cruz. I've had my soul infused with the incredible power of the American southwest deserts. My music is an expression of what I feel when I observe these natural places, rhythms, voices. Nothing is more important to me. The Earth is a strange and magical thing; to me this is the most powerful force imaginable. I find it deeply disturbing and painful that we've done so much to harm this planet and ourselves. This civilization has achieved a terrible dominion over the planet, and we are running it into extinction. And for what? This may be the end. Many beautiful things have already met their end, and still people show so little awareness, so little care, so little rage at what we have done. We've been born into a cycle of destruction from which it is difficult to escape. I dream of the day when all this is gone, washed away, and we are free again. Admittedly it's sort of hypocritical to praise nature and rail against civilization with a form of music that is totally dependent on that civilization, but I don't believe that this element of hypocrisy is important when compared to the positive effect which can be created. Procer Beneficus is my way of celebrating the inconceivable vast beauty of the Earth, that which is a part of the Earth, and that which is beyond the Earth.

Thank you for being willing to say that so clearly. It is refreshing and very interesting to encounter ecologically grounded thought within the dark arts underground. In your recent indictment of Myspace you betray a lucid understanding of sociopolitical realities that lie below the threshold of consciousness for most. This is not the norm for individuals in the Black Metal milieu, where political thought is generally restricted to whatever half-baked concepts have emerged from the latest gross misunderstanding of Nietzsche. How did you come upon such a well-developed political consciousness, and what led you to speak your mind on these issues?

I think it's critical that those of us who feel it speak it clearly and loudly. What could be more important than our (and when I say "our" I mean not only humans but most of our biosphere as we know it) survival, our well-being (in all senses), and our freedom? Those are exactly the issues which are at stake; those are exactly the things which are being not only threatened but also actively oppressed and destroyed by this insane way of life. My political consciousness is, I feel, still growing, and I am certainly not making any claims to total awareness – I have much to learn. I'm always trying to do more reading. The seeds were sown long, long ago, though. The real beginning was simply the fact that I've had almost total access to nature since the day I was born; city life is something to which I'm still deeply unaccustomed. I spent a lot of time camping with my family. When I was very young (elementary school) I had personal issues with the system and I used to imagine alternative methods of education; ones which focused on the strengths and weaknesses of individuals rather than on a standardized, test-based, one-size-fits-all force feed workforce prep. In fourth grade I read Ray Bradbury's "Farenheit 451" and (though I certainly couldn't have put it in these words back then) began thinking about the authoritarian nature of our society. I dreamed of a culture which nurtures and illuminates rather than isolates. I channeled my anger through the more or less socially conscious metal and punk music which I listened to. In ninth grade or so I picked up the book "Ishmael" by Daniel Quinn, and that changed everything. Since then it's been a long, slow climb toward awareness, and thoughts on what I can do to make a difference. If I weren't an artist I likely would have studied ecology in college. My general social and political awareness sprang out of my ecological concerns, and has been enhanced and encouraged by a few key acquaintances, friends, and lovers along my path. I am a strong proponent of the idea that one should always be a student, and I'm trying to enhance my awareness at any opportunity I get. Only recently did I arrive at the conclusion that I should incorporate this perspective into my art project which is Procer Beneficus. PB began as a strictly spiritual / aesthetic affair, but I've come to realize that there is no real separation between these realms. I must put forth my total experience. No matter how small my voice or how hopeless the situation seems, I must do it. To quote one of my favorite songs by one of my favorite musicians: "I'm climbin' this ladder / My head in the clouds / I hope that it matters..."

-J. Joshua Phillips

A Plea to Those Who Care (and hopefully to those who are simply witness)

My good friends, my beautiful sister, and those with the best of intentions who proclaim themselves my "friends" by clicking a link on this website: I would like to offer to you a message and plea. I would be deeply gratified if you would hear me out.

Very soon now (it's March 4th; I am setting the date as April 1st) I will remove this myspace page from the regularly accessible internet. I'm sure that the myspace servers will archive the data which were once stored here (they already have done so in fact), but that is mostly irrelevant. What is important is that we choose to boycott myspace as a means of social connection and interaction from now on. I implore you, those of you who are my personal friends or relatives (my friends are my relatives and vice versa), and those of you who are supportive of my musical endeavor as Procer Beneficus (both of you groups to whom I am greatly indebted and grateful), to immediately sever contact with myspace as much as possible.

Myspace is owned indirectly by News Corp., which is effectively controlled by Rupert Murdoch, one of the wealthiest individuals on this planet. This website makes money by selling advertisement space to various other groups. Many people seem to believe that if they do not click on advertisements on myspace, they aren't contributing to the money making process. I myself once believed this. This is an incorrect assumption. Every hit myspace receives (and it currently receives the most hits out of any website online) increases the value of the advertising space available. Therefore every time anyone visits myspace, they are generating income for News Corp.

Why should we care if News Corp. is making money?

News Corp.'s agenda (as a major player in the globalist-capitalist game) is very clearly in opposition of the interest of the common human being; in fact Fox News, one of News Corp.'s subsidiaries, helped put George W. Bush into office, which, as any properly informed and awake person understands, was a means of advancing the authoritarian-fascist agenda which is already rampant in the United States of America (and is subsequently expanding across the rest of the globe). Media conglomerates such as News Corp. are examples of the most blatantly vile, corrupt, and downright evil organizations to have ever existed on this planet Earth. They sacrifice values such as honor, integrity, sustainable ecological existence, community, and species (including human) rights solely in favor of increasing profits. They perpetuate the current fiat-currency economic system which remorselessly exploits and in fact deeply encourages horrors such as expanding class division, wage slavery, racism, sexism, and hard-drug trafficking as a pacification system. They reinforce hierarchy and therefore oppression on every level.

I feel as though these facts are indicated quite clearly by common sense and a basic knowledge of the world's current governmental and economic structures. To those of you who feel that these facts are revelations, I would highly, highly recommend intensively researching the current state of affairs. You may be surprised and deeply disconcerted by the degree of corruption to which our civilization has sunk.

I cannot be certain of what exactly my music signifies to all of you. However, I can confidently say that music, for most of my life, has been to me a means of deep personal spiritual expression which has always been necessarily opposed to authoritarian, hierarchical control. I haven't always understood this perfectly, nor have I always had those specific terminologies at my disposal, but the feeling has always been there; the feeling that somehow music which is infused with anger, sorrow, the beauty of the Earth, and a long-sighted cosmic perspective is somehow expressive of our existence and of something which we absolutely deserve but have been denied. Now that I do have access to and understanding of that terminology, I have no hesitation to use it freely.

Myspace is the perfect example of a subsidiary force of a larger evil which is actively involved in that which is denying us of the egalitarian existence which we deserve; which is our birthright by nature but is being denied us by current, capitalist civilization.

Recently life itself has, for me, become a constant struggle to better myself and the conditions of life of those around me. I believe in every fiber of my being that we as humans must commune with each other in order to construct a healthy, sustainable way of living. If we do not give ourselves to each other, we allow ourselves to become the prey of the rich, corrupt, money-obsessed scum who wish nothing more than for us to divide ourselves via hyper-individualistic consumerism for the conquering that we may further their profits. For me, this has become a battle on all fronts of my existence (particularly since I was born into a privileged sector of this culture of racism, sexism, and class slavery). I hope that at least some of you will understand why this battle has become absolutely necessary for me, and perhaps see why it might be necessary for you.

As if you weren't already aware, Procer Beneficus is one of my musical projects. Its primary genre categorizations are often cited as "black metal" and "ambient" music; basically fringe forms of music when considering the general population's interests (that is... the general affluent population which has access to recorded music at all). Its goal is to celebrate the beauty of this planet we call Earth (and everything that makes it so, including its surrounding solar system), and the beauty of our limited understanding of the universe. Frontiers are gorgeous things... Procer Beneficus celebrates the frontiers of human consciousness for the beautiful things that they are. As apolitical as these goals may seem, the time has come that I make clear the ground upon which I stand. I cannot and will not accept the oppression of any of my fellow human beings, or for that matter, my fellow animals, plants, and landscapes. The Earth is a complex biosphere of codependent and coemergent lifeforms and geographies; to attempt to oppose or exploit this system (which has been carefully established over billions of years) is to demonstrate a conceit so shallow that destruction or at least ruin is fundamentally coded into its existence.

So friends, please... if you care about your neighbor, if you find meaning in interaction with fellow humans, if you find beauty in the wheel of a sunrise or a sunset or the constellations, if you love animals or rocks or trees or dirt or air, if you value freedom in its truest sense, if you feel that women and men are and always have been equals, if you feel that the color of skin is an example of the diverse beauty of our species rather than an indicator of hierarchical status, if you feel that food, air, water, socialization, sex, and spiritual communion are basic human rights, then please...

...cease your usage of myspace. I understand that as a website it is useful. It has made itself useful on purpose. Everyone uses it, so more people use it, and it perpetuates a vicious cycle. However, the world previously existed without myspace, and it functioned pretty smoothly. If you really need the internet, there are online alternatives which are not owned by such evil corporations. Research and look them up for yourself; increase your autonomy. Let's take responsibility for our consciousness and start asserting our values.

I'd like to begin myself by offering alternative (although I do admit, still seriously flawed) ways of contacting me: **e-mail: hawthornhaze@gmail.com**
(Yes... that's a gmail... trading one evil for another... don't get me started)

If you really care and would like a less horrendous method of communicating with me, please let me know and I'll be glad to give you the address of my mailbox. Letters are wonderful things (not that there's nothing wrong with the USPS...).

Anyway, thank you for paying attention; I hope my endeavor has been somehow helpful or informative. If you have anything to say, critical or otherwise, please feel free to contact me (though I must inform you now that I fail terribly at keeping up to date with my e-mails, I generally hate that form of communication). I hope you will agree with me that constructive, egalitarian mindsets are in the best interest of all humankind.

Love, wonder, and solidarity,

Derek.

Fauna

This interview with Fauna was the impetus for the creation of this zine. Though the ideas fueling the drive to create it have been longstanding, I have wanted to interview Fauna for quite sometime now. With Rain receiving more widespread attention, I thought it especially relevant to delve into the deep thought and passion that motivate this ensemble.

Both Fauna and their predecessor, Threnos, helped carve out many of the frameworks for what has become known as Cascadian Black Metal. Fauna, Threnos and their kindred Chet (from Blood of the Black Owl and Ruhr Hunter) as well as many other lesser well-known luminaries from the Pacific Northwestern United States cultivated the fertile grounds from which others have taken root. Most well known of course being Wolves in the Throne Room.

Fauna cannot be seen from a modern perspective, their performances are not rock concerts and their sound is not for the mainstream, nor even for the mainstream of the prodigious underground metal scene. They exist as emissaries from the sacred realm, the magicians and shamans that help transport us between realms and light the funeral pyre to the corpse of modernity.

-Set Sothis Hoy La

Echtra and Vines, would you be willing to discuss your chosen names? Do you see yourselves as embodying different entities when you take the stage or conduct a recording?

Absolutely. Echtra and Vines are beings other than those who normally inhabit the coil we are bound to. While there is inevitably a residue of identity that remains after having transcended ourselves, the reasoning and feeling processes we undergo in the altered state of consciousness Fauna represents are wholly different from those we normally experience. Putting on corpsepaint and preparing to engage the otherworld is a powerful process, and requires the individual to loosen their hold on the mundane. This inevitably results, for us, in the attainment of an ecstatic state that cannot be understood as arising from our individuated selves. Those other beings we become are a result of the meeting between ourselves and the All.

Echtra is a word from the Irish language (often mistakenly referred to as Gaelic (it is actually just one of a number of variants in the family of Gaelic languages)), signifying a story cycle wherein the hero finds themselves unexpectedly transported into the otherworld. These tales, common in the bardic tradition of our ancestors, commonly feature a person going about daily tasks and finding themselves suddenly catapulted onto sacred ground.

The most effective way to explain the meaning of Vines is thus:
Vines are the arms of God. Rooted firmly within the Earth yet ceaselessly reaching skyward; strangling Life with Life.

I see Fauna as an expression of Atavistic Black Metal, while also being fiercely Heathen. This can be seen as distinct from "orthodox black metal," which tries to strengthen ties to Satanism and believes that Black Metal should be strictly about Satan. What are your leanings in this regard?

One of the fundamental attributes of Black Metal is an anti-modern stance, an intuitive rejection of civilization and the desire for its destruction. Whichever direction the original impulse went in, it seemed to retain that basic critical framework. You can see this atavistic tendency in the themes of pagan retribution and the fetishization of Nature, both of which have been ubiquitous within the Black Metal milieu. This basic critique was also combined with a strong antipathy toward Christianity that usually (at least in the early years) meant a tendency toward Satanism. While we have tremendous respect for those early pioneers, we do not fall within this tradition.

Part of our rejection of Satanism relates to time. For one thing, the spiritual forms that resonate most deeply in us are older than Satan. More importantly, however, our cosmology stresses an atemporality that resists the historicization of mythology. Judeo-Christian thought, which birthed the figure of Satan, represents the apotheosis of the entry of human consciousness into a time-bound understanding of our world. Previous to this, humans embraced what Mircea Eliade wrote of in his text The Myth of the Eternal Return: a mode of being that facilitated an ahistorical engagement with the mythic structure, a doorway into becoming contemporary with one's Gods, a recognition that the life one lived and the one enjoyed by distant ancestors were the same. This is the fundamental religious structure of humans, found in all pre-civilized peoples in one form or another. Christianity's positing of a chronology of cosmological events that exist in time destroys our spiritual faculties.

One of the deformations of consciousness that is connected with this is a strong emphasis on duality, the inability to tolerate the shades of gray which reality ultimately is. To paraphrase Paul Shepard: one aspect of maturity is the ability to affirm ambiguity, a development that the ontogenetic crippling we experience as civilized people renders very difficult to achieve. Christianity shackles us to a perceptual lens that can conceive of things only in terms of duality, apparent in its focus on good and evil, heaven and earth, and, most importantly for our conversation, Jesus & Satan. This duality is part of the legacy from which we would like to break free, moving instead towards a pluralistic embrace of our world and the nuanced shades of meaning that elude reductionistic ideologies.

Perhaps the ultimate reductionism exhibited by the Judeo-Christian paradigm is monotheism, the facet of most "world religions" that lends them their unique virulence. The sense that the multivalent world we inhabit could be attributed to one deity is an obvious failure of understanding, and the rabidity of those infected with this madness to "convert" others an obvious signal of its destructiveness. When humans had multiple gods they were capable of abiding multiple truths at once, and when the landscape was intimately connected to our relationship with spirits and ancestors we recognized the fundamental truth that, in the deepest possible sense, All is One. Christianity works against this psychic assimilation of the world and the personal integration it offers, limiting the individual instead to a puerile obsession with "good and bad." Satanism simply capitulates to this essential logic.

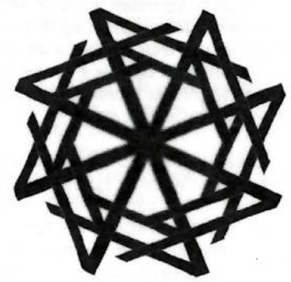
Thus, Satan and Christ are only two forks of the same tongue. What we want to stress is that Satanism relies upon and supports the Christian worldview. It exists within their framework and strengthens their reality. As creatures inculcated within this Christian gestalt, we have a hard time thinking outside of it. Satanism, however antagonistic it might seem to Christianity, does not exist outside Christianity, nor does it threaten Christianity.

All of this notwithstanding, we do recognize the mythic potency of Satan and embrace the Luciferian principle he represents. Most if not all mythological systems have a trickster figure, the animal or theriomorphic deity that in some way rebels against the established order, often seeming to relish confounding humans with inexplicable mysteries and unsolvable problems. Lucifer is the questioner, the one who refuses to accept truth as given, and as such wields a power that should be sought by all individuals.

What we seek to connect with, in contradistinction to the abstraction of the Christian faith, is the numinous power that resides in our blood and rings in our ears. This force, which opens our eyes and then speaks to us in ways even we cannot comprehend, is atavism. These are the ancient ways of being that do not need to be recreated; they are there, waiting to spring up through us if we only open ourselves to their light. These intransigent human potentialities are like the weeds that perennially spring up between the cracks in the pavement. We do not need to plant the weeds, nor do we need to tear up the pavement. If we cease thwarting natural processes the balance will be restored.

One of the other primary attributes exhibited by Black Metal is the expression of raw, visceral pain at the dreariness of our modern existence. We believe that humans have a deeply embedded notion of how we are supposed to be, and how the world around us ought to be. These are genetic expectations, conditioned by millennia of adaptation and refinement that took place in the wild and gave birth to the human soul. Yet the abjectly profane modern world around us ceaselessly disappoints these notions, and the tension between what our inner animal demands and what the outer world denies results in psychosis and misery. Through our music and performance we attempt to literally recreate this world that is almost forgotten (at least to the conscious mind). Our goal is to create, in a real and transparent way, a transcendent space where we can be animals again. This allows us to take part in our shamanic legacy of communication with the animal and plant kingdoms, as well as the world of the spirits. The idea of a nascent god within each of us, within each animal we encounter, within each stone upon the path; this is the true threat to the sky god. The crux of our atavism is this process of our inborn desires rising up unbidden toward manifestation. In seeking to honor these instincts we challenge the hegemony of the modern world and pay tribute to our ancestors, for this is our true human path.

Fauna have performed live and also recorded and self-released 2 compact discs. Both CDs are essentially one song that is over an hour in length, and the packages you produce require much labor. Live rituals also demonstrate a large investment of time, and are clearly based on important overarching concepts. Knowing the immense thought and energy that goes into both elements, do you have a strong feeling about either being the primary vehicle for the endeavors of Fauna?



Siberian shamans have referred to their drum, beaten in a simple and repetitive fashion, as their horse. This signified the ability of the drum to carry

them away, beyond the world of the senses. As twenty-first century beings, waylaid in a maze conjured by the devastating influences of rationalism and materialism, Fauna is our horse.

Essentially a vehicle for ritual action, this project can actually be understood as the live rite itself. The recordings are documents that we share with others for use in private environments, but they must be understood as artifacts. It is an unalterable truth that the mediation involved in the process of taking something living and turning it into an object dims its fire. However, we have been told that these recordings are powerful tools, and we honor the fact that we can provide a portal for others in this age of fragmentation. There is a curious power in being able to disseminate these portable documents that can transform faraway spaces, artifacts imbued with the numinous value of our workings.

There also exist certain unique advantages to the recording process. The music itself, used as a tool for intrapsychic exploration in the live environment, is able in the recorded environment to attain to a certain purity. Because the music is channeled in a controlled atmosphere a clarity is achieved that live situations disallow. There are many variables in performance, and inevitably some degree of exactitude in the conveyance of sounds is lost. We allocate a tremendous amount of energy to the songwriting process, and value highly the ability to give the songs themselves a vibrant life of their own.

Fauna are more than a "band" proper, being a duo; you forsake some of the trappings of a traditional live band and perform to backing tapes. Do you see yourselves moving towards having additional members? Do you want to have live drums or perform as a "full band," or is your preference more towards the ritualistic medium as the embodiment of Fauna?

Our priority will always be the ritual. As long as we can continue to create spheres of illumination as just two individuals, without too much aesthetic compromise, we will do so. There are severe limitations that we accept by using electronic drums and backing tapes, and we do wish that we could overcome those limitations without compromising our principles. It would certainly be ideal to have a live drummer or other musicians within our project; however, it is more important to keep our project philosophically coherent than to try to incorporate new members. If there were someone who was qualified and shared our vision, we would not hesitate to welcome them within our fold.

You enacted the 3rd cycle of Fauna's "initiatory labyrinth" in 2007. This 3rd cycle focused on flight and its place in shamanism and other mystical traditions. In visions you were directed to work with different individuals throughout the tour to take part as the Great Perceiver or Owl, who would present you something to help you on your journey. Could you talk about what is important for you in envisioning a performance and the process in working with these ideas balanced with the music that you write? Are the songs created and then each of the performances are conceived separately or is everything developed together? Could you talk about the first 2 cycles thusly?

What is important to us in envisioning performance is multifold. Primarily, we are using the rites we display to integrate the various phases of our own initiation, though this is by no means the sole motive. We seek total liberation, and thusly dedicate our works to the fellow seekers that have found us. We attempt to design our performances in such a way that the observer/participant is able to enter as deeply into ritual time and space as they wish, creating the possibilities of transcendence and transformation for those who partake of the realm we open. We are also opening ourselves to be a conduit for the voice of the Others, and to engage in worship of the destructive and regenerative principles of the natural world.

In following and developing these various impulses, for this 3rd cycle we realized that we wanted to invite other people to also become a conduit for the voice of the Others. We sent out a call to certain individuals we saw as ready to enter more deeply into the liminal space of the interspecies antiphony that is Fauna, inviting them into our dialogue with the spirits. We were interacting with a mythic and supernatural dimension of the human experience, and wanted to offer them the opportunity to embody that dimension and bring us the further guidance we were seeking. For the 1st Cycle, the piece that has come to be known as "Rain," we composed the music first. We worked with a local scribe known only as Ocean (the purveyor of the sonic alchemy of Port of the Sun and author of Black Hills Cabal), who created much of the lyrical material, and then set about to conjure a working fit for the soundscape and meaning layers that had been channeled. We worked with various individuals, including brYan le Fay (an extremely talented artist in the realms of dance and music who enacts the unclassifiable (and brilliant) Poison Ring), to bring to life 3 slightly different live rituals over the course of about 1 year.

Our 2nd Cycle, entitled "The Hunt," was approached the opposite way. We sought visions of what needed to come next, and were gifted the images of a long mythic journey. This became simultaneously a story, ritual actions to be undertaken, an exposition of the themes through lyrics, and a map of the sonic textures that were thought to be conducive to the process we sought. The music and lyrics were entirely based on meeting the needs of the story, and were thus quite laborious to midwife into being. We worked closely with local artisan Lina Mclean of Brisingamen Design to embody the physical elements of the story and design a coherent action, and performed this 3 times, again over the course of a year.

What ideas most embody the intellectual underpinnings of Fauna? If you had to pick 3 to 5 ideas or concepts as a manifesto of sorts what would they be?

We are animals, and the less we give voice to our animal instincts the more psychotic we will become.

The essence of life is to be found in wildness; civilization is an inherently destructive institution that inhibits our humanness.

There are spirits or forces within all creation that can be communicated with if we know how.

We must return to a mythic consciousness wherein we conceive of ourselves as divine.

What motivates you to express yourself musically? Why Metal/Black Metal? Do you have specific motivations as to the construction of your sound? Do you feel that Fauna has become its own entity that you nurture with your passions? Some people have very strong idea of what music fits with one band and what would constitute another band. You both are also involved with Fearthainne, a completely acoustic project with other members. Do you have clear boundaries in what you define as the Fauna sound?

Black Metal seems an apt medium for our purposes because it lends itself so well to primal expression. It also has the potential to accurately convey the overarching sense of despair we feel so strongly when confronted with the devastation of the world and its peoples. Through our music and especially our rituals, we create a transcendent space in which we have an outlet to be as fully human as we possibly can. This involves engaging with many stages of consciousness and many modes of expression, and these modes surface in all of our music (though some speak more strongly through different projects). With Fearthainne we invoke spirits and watch as they dance between us; with Fauna we become those spirits. We construct our sounds to demarcate this transcendent space, and to texture the fabric of that trip into mythic experience. Elements of black metal work quite well toward this goal. The blast beat serves perfectly as the shaman's drum, beating out a repetitive relentless rhythm to draw the seeker into a trance state. The blurry guitars accentuate this rhythm while also setting the tone for the dream state. Through modulations of the buzz-saw tone and occasional movements of doom and ambience, we are able to lead the listener down the tunnels of an ancient tomb, to discover the truth of their inner fire.

It appears to me that things close to the Earth are of the highest value to you. The lyrics often express emotive ties to both fauna and flora, and the band name itself also speaks to this element. Can you talk about your relationship with the environment, nature and your feelings about civilization in regards to this?

Yes, wildness and the Others (plant and animal) are woven into the heart of this project. One of the many aspects of Fauna is making war upon civilization, and we see our efforts as an assault upon the modern. We are integrally allied with the world of Nature, and are eager participants in the battle that is being waged every moment for the triumph of natural intelligence and the full reclamation of the Land. We prioritize the past, particularly the Deep Past, in our understanding of what it means to be a human being on Earth.

Animals have always been essential to our spiritual and psychic maturational process, and the paucity of wild animals in the experiential lives of most people ensures that they will never be truly human. We recognize the necessity of entering into relationship with all that is wild and feral, both in the world and within ourselves, in order to attain to fullness and a connection with the Divine.

I think that it is important to talk about time and your feelings towards it. Both recordings that I am aware of, Rain and the Hunt, are over an hour in length. Many of the cliffs are drawn out lending a very cerebral element. What led you towards this incarnation of time and space in song writing? Is this a purposeful strategy to invite the listener into a meditative repose and thus initiate the listener into the shamanic process? Perhaps it speaks of the music being more of a personal journey and the listener less conceived of. Where does the listener/viewer fit into your ideas about music/performance?

The length and repetitive quality of the songs are crucial aspects of their transformative power. We are attempting to speak to different strata of mind simultaneously, and particularly seek to tap into something deeper within consciousness that is usually latent within the modern experience. This is an aspect of the psyche that has a different quality of attention and requires different modes of engagement in order to fully manifest.

While safeguarding our own ascension is the penultimate goal of this project, we imagine our conversation with the listener/viewer when we compose and, as stated earlier, attempt to speak to the deepest recesses of Soul with our works. Actually, our ideal is to erase conceptions of audience entirely, bringing those that interact with us into the fold. While the rituals we design are performance-based and not directly participatory, we hope to create a space that can foster a transgression of the self and create the possibility of attaining to the consciousness that lies trapped below the limited functioning of ego.

If this project existed solely for us we wouldn't bother going to all the trouble of designing the live events. As you correctly intuited, it's an immense amount of work, which we gratefully undertake as a gift to the world and an arrow in the body of the Tame. The role of the shaman has traditionally included balancing the relationship between humans and the more-than-human world as well as offering healing to members of the human community. We don't shrink from this charge, and are committed to offering opportunities for the transformation of others as we pursue our own. Fauna exists as a conduit for of the soul retrieval of all.

Georg Heym 1911

Georg Heym.

Georg Heym

(1887 – 1912)

The sun is about to set as the two young men reach the Cafe des Westerns on the Kurfürstendamm, where the General Staff of our artistic conspiracy spend their evenings. During the day we hardly ever went there. We have scarcely sat down on the red plush seats beneath the 'trompe l'oeil' mirror, when an acquaintance passes me the latest issue of the 'Aktion'. Before me I see columns of verse, the poems of Georg Heym printed on grey paper. When I look up, the eyes of my friends are all staring curiously at me; because many of us rejected these poems at first. I was filled with admiration not only for the language and form of the verses, with their echoes of Baudelaire and Stefan George, the unique quality of the poetic images, but also for the supernatural vision of the future which rose up before me, and I was overcome with awe at their image of war. What did I read?

He that slept long has risen,
Arisen from deep vaults far below.
He stands in the dusk, huge and unknown,
And crushes the moon to pulp in his black hand.

Into the evening noises of the cities there falls far away
The frost and shadow of an alien darkness.
And the round bustle of the market stops and turns to ice.
A growing silence. They look round. And no one knows."

This remembrance by Armin T. Wegner speaks to me of the particular quality of Georg Heym's writings that I find compelling. Some writers and artists find their merits best within the context of their lives, which is perhaps more important than their actual oeuvres. Heym's writing, however, has the lure of great authors like Trakl and Baudelaire which lie outside the time and place of the original writings. It stands on its own and transcends the author's societal contextualization and personal life.

Georg Heym was born in 1887 in Hirschberg in lower Silesia, in what is now southern Poland. His family lived in an area called Jelenia Góra, and Georg was by all accounts a fairly normal child of the Wilhelmine middle class. He was he son of Hermann Heym, a lawyer in the government prosecution service and a veteran Prussian military officer. Heym struggled against the imposition of the dream of his parents, who saw Heym becoming a lawyer, finding his own dream instead in the pursuit of his artistic compulsions.

The family moved to Berlin in 1900, which helped nurture his passion for poetry. In 1910 he met the poet Simon Guttman, who introduced him to the Neue Club, recently developed from a student society at the University of Berlin. It's president, Jakob van Hoddis, became very close to Heym, as well as did Erwin Loewenson (A.K.A. Golo Gangi). Other prominent figures of this group included Gottfried Benn, Else Lasker-Schüler and Karl Kraus. The group came to found a major current of German Expressionism, hosting the influential "Neopathetischen Cabaret."

Neopathetisches Cabaret

4. Abend: Freitag 9. Dezember 1910 8½ Uhr
Café Kerkau, Behrenstr. 48.

Aus dem Programm:
(Reihenfolge vorbehalten)

Kurt Hiller:	Der Eth.
Georg Heym:	Gedichte.
Else Lasker-Schüler:	Prosa.
Jakob van Hoddis.	Italien.
	und
Ernst Blass:	Gedichte
Neopathetisches Potpourri.	
Else Lasker-Schüler:	Gedichte.
Golo Gangi:	Aus dem Cyclus Die Heimsuchenden. Die Unsichtbaren (Szene a. d. Irrenhaus)
Jakob van Hoddis:	Porträts.
	und
Erich Unger:	Die Gehemten.
Jakob van Hoddis:	Der Jüngst.
Kurt Hiller:	Elegien.
Paul Marx (Less. Theater):	Frank Wedekind „Rabbi Esra".
Friedrich Nietzsche:	Epilog.

Der nächste Abend des Neopathetischen Cabarets findet ca. 15. Januar 1911 statt. Jeden Mittwoch Abend 10 Uhr Nollendorf-Casino, Kleiststr. 41. Gäste auch ohne Einführung willkommen.
Geschäftsstelle des Neuen Club: Dr. Kurt Hiller, W. 30, Nollendorfstr. 34

Heym was remembered in a variety of interesting ways. His publisher Ernst Rowohlt noted how he appeared to look like a "butcher's assistant." The poet and muse Emmy Ball-Hennings described him as "half rowdy, half 'bandit' and half angel." He was labeled by peers, either admiringly or condescendingly, as a 'force of nature.' Known for his aggressive anti-intellectuallism, Anthony Hasler writes in his introduction to his translation of Heym's poems, "This young man, evidently bursting with animal energy, was seen as a type of artistic naïf - one who could tap the resources of a rich unconscious life, but did so with little regard for the aesthetic procedures of mere consciousness (p. xv, Poems)."

Der Neue Club
Montag, den 16. Mai, abends 8 Uhr
Salon Cassirer, Viktoriastrasse Nr. 35
Georg Heym liest ungedruckte Dichtungen
Billette à 2.50 Mk. u. 1,50 Mk. bei Edm. Meyer, Potsdamer Strasse, und an der Abendkasse.

Heym passed major legal examinations by having friends pass answers through the window. He was a hopeless romantic and his love life was very turbulent. He was also conflicted about his general state of being, forced to pursue the career allotted to him by family and tradition. His diaries show this along with a highly fertile dream life, which he recorded with merciless detachment. Though he was blazingly productive throughout this period, Heym only published one volume of poetry in his lifetime: Der Ewige Tag.

Heym died in an accident while ice skating. Some have noted the eerie prefacing of this event through a dream that he had:

"I found myself standing on the banks of a great lake which seemed to be covered with a type of stone coating. It struck me as a sort of frozen water. On occasion it seemed to be like the sort of skin that forms on top of milk. Some people were moving on the lake, people with bags or baskets, perhaps they were going to market. I ventured a couple of steps, and the plates held. I felt that they were very thin, since as I stepped upon them they swayed back and forth. I had gone for some time and then a woman encountered me, who cautioned me to turn back, the plates would soon break. But I persisted. And suddenly I felt that the plates were dissolving beneath me, but I did not fall. I proceeded further, walking upon the water. Then the thought occurred to me that I might fall. In that moment, I sank into green, slimy, kelp-infested waters. Still, I did not feel lost, I began to swim. As though by a miracle, the shore, though first distant, drew closer and closer, and with a few strokes I landed in a sandy, sunny harbor." Dichtungen und Schriften, vol. 3, p. 185 (S.H. transl.)

In chronicling the circumstances of Heym's passing, Anthony Hasler writes, "On 16 January 1912, Heym set off with his friend Ernst Balcke for a skating expedition on the frozen Havel. They did not return, and their bodies were found a few days later. It emerged that at some point Balcke had fallen through the ice, and that Heym, possibly trying to rescue him, had also been pulled under. For half an hour before giving way he clung to life, calling out: some forestry workers heard him from a distance but were unable to reach him across the ice. When he was found, his distorted features and clenched hands gave signs how grim the struggle had been." (p. xi, Poems)"

Putting aside the details of his personal life, what I find important about Heym's legacy is how shockingly modern and contemporary his writings still appear. Despite the advance of computers and myriad other technological advances (and the inevitable distractions they present), many of the basic drives and desires from a century ago still resonate and seem so close. Though this man is a distant shadow, his words remain. These words themselves captivate and compel. Here then, let them speak...

- Set Sothis Nox La

The Autopsy

This story is full of terrifying beauty as well as ugliness. It belongs to the phase of expressionism that gave rise to painters like Kirchner and Nolde, and poets like Georg Trakl. In expressionism, painting, poetry and fiction are drawn close together.

Firstly, one sees in this story the exterior of a corpse lying on a white table; then the exposed intestines; and lastly the innermost secret lyrical memory of a summed-up life. It is not difficult to visualize this story as an surrealist painting, or even a sequence in a film. And the vision locked in and then cracked open from his skull is a lyric poem, a hymn to the beauty of living.

The dead man lay naked and alone on a white table in the great theater, in the oppressive whiteness, the cruel sobriety of the operating theater that seemed to be vibrating still with the screams of the unending torment.

The noon sun covered him and caused the livid spots on his forehead to awaken: it conjured up a bright green out of his naked belly and made it swell like a great sack filled with water.

His body was like the brilliant calyx of a giant flower, a mysterious plant from the Indian jungles which someone had shyly laid down at the altar of death. Splendid shades of red and blue grew along his loins, and the great wound below his navel, which emitted a terrible odor, split open slowly in the heat like a great red furrow.

The doctors entered. A few kindly men in white coats, with dueling scars and golden pince-nez.

They went up to the dead man and looked at him with interest and professional comments.

They took their dissecting instruments out of white cupboards, white boxes full of hammers, bonesaws with strong teeth, files, horrible batteries of tweezers, little cases full of enormous needles that seemed to cry out incessantly for flesh like the curved beaks of vultures.

They commenced their gruesome work. They were like terrible torturers. The blood flowed over their hands which they plunged ever more deeply into the cold corpse, pulling out its contents, like white cooks drawing a goose.

The intestines coiled around their arms, greenish-yellow snakes, and the excrement dripped on their coats, a warm, putrid fluid. They punctured the bladder. Cold urine glittered inside it like a yellow wine. They poured it into large bowls; it had a sharp and caustic stench like ammonia. But the dead man slept. Patiently he suffered them to tug him this way and that, to pull at his hair. He slept.

And while the blows of the hammer resounded on his head, a dream, the remnant of love in him, awoke like a torch shining into his night.

In front of the large window a great wide sky opened, full of small white clouds that floated in the light, in the afternoon quiet, like small white gods. And the swallows traveled high up in the blue, trembling in the warm July sun.

The dead man's black blood trickled over the blue putrescence of his forehead. It condensed in the heat to a terrible cloud, and the decay of death crept over him with its brightly colored talons. His skin began to flow apart, his belly grew white as an eel's under the greedy fingers of the doctors, who were bathing their arms up to the elbows in his moist flesh.

Decay pulled the dead man's mouth apart. He seemed to smile. He dreamed of a blissful star, of a fragrant summer evening. His dissolving lips quivered as though under a light kiss.

How I love you. I loved you so much. Shall I tell you how much I loved you? When you walked through the poppy fields, yourself a fragrant poppy flame, you had drawn the whole evening into yourself. And your dress that blew about your hair still burned and flamed with all my kisses. So you walked away, looking back at me all the time. And the lamp in your hand swayed like a glowing rose in the dusk long after you had gone.

I shall see you again tomorrow. Here, under the chapel window; here, where the candlelight pours through and changes your hair into a golden forest; here, where the narcissi cling to your ankles, tender as tender kisses.

I shall see you again every night at the hour of dusk. We shall never leave each other. How I love you! Shall I tell you how much I love you?

And the dead man trembled softly with bliss on his white mortuary table, while the iron chisel in the doctor's hand broke open the bones of his temple.

And the Horns of Summer Fell Silent

And the horns of summer fell silent in the death of the meadows,
Into the darkness cloud upon cloud floated off.
But remotely the bordering forests were shrinking,
Muffled in mourning like men that follow a hearse.

Loud sang the gale in the terror of the fields that were fading;
It drove into poplars to shape the white tower between boughs.
And like the sweepings of wind there lay in the waste land Below, a village, drab roofs in a huddle of grap.

But on and on, as far as the pallid horizon
The tents of autumn extended their fabric of corn,
The numberless cities, but empty, forgotten.
And no one was walking about in the streets.

And the shade of the night sang.
Only the raven still drifted
Here and there under leaden clouds in the rain,
Alone in the wind, as down in the dark of our foreheads
Black thoughts abate in disconsolate hours

You Are As Dark As Night
to Emma R.

You are as dark as night,
Her black and starless cloak unfolded wide,
The deepest shaft drowning the talking light.
No, darker yet, in greyest twilight glides
Your face so pale and white
And secret in its glow
Before you night's aflame,
Awash with blue entrancing fires.

Come, empress of the sultry night
And lay your cool white arm
About my parched and sunburnt brows:
Come, lead me to your temple's marble darkness,
That it may lighten for you with my love.
Then shall a single sun no longer be
Battalions of star-suns shall we see
Kindle our wedding-torch throughout the night.

Und die Hörner des Sommers Verstummten

Und die Hörner des Sommers verstummten im Tode der Fluren,
In das Dunkel flog Wolke auf Wolke dahin.
Aber am Rande schrumpften die Wälder verloren,
Wie Gefolge der Särge in Trauer vermummt.

Laut sang der Sturm im Schrecken der bleichenden Felder,
Er fuhr in die Pappeln und bog einen weißen Turm.
Und wie der Kehricht des Windes lag in der Leere
Drunten ein Dorf, aus grauen Dächern gehäuft.

Aber hinaus bis unten am Grauen des Himmels
Waren aus Korn des Herbstes Zelte gebaut,
Unzählige Städte, doch leer und vergessen.
Und niemand ging in den Gassen herum.

Und es sank der Schatten der Nacht.
Nur die Raben noch irrten
Unter den drückenden Wolken im Regen hin,
Einsam im Wind, wie im Dunkel der Schläfen
Schwarze Gedanken in trostloser Stunde fliehn.

Du Bist so Dunkel, Als die Nacht

Du bist so dunkel, als die nacht,
Wenn sternenlos sie ihren schwarzen Mantel breitet.
Dal letzte Licht ertrinkt in tiefstem Schacht:
Nein, dunkler noch, im grausten Dunkel gleitet
Dein Weißes, bleiches Angesicht
Und mit geheimem Schimmer
Loht die Nacht vor dir
In magisch blaues Licht getaucht.

Komm, Königin der schwülen Nacht
Und lege deinen weißen kühlen Arm
Um meine sonnverbrannten, heißen Schläfen,
Komm, führe mich in deinen marmordunkeln Tempel ein,
Den meine Liebe dir erhellen soll.
Dann soll nicht eine einzge Sonne mehr
Dann soll sternensonnen uns ein Heer,
Die Hochzeitsfackel durch die Nacht entflammen!

Umbra Vitae

The people on the streets draw up and stare,
While overhead huge portents cross the sky:
Round sanglike towers threatening comets flare,
Death-bearing, fiery-snouted where they fly.

On every roof astrologers abound,
Enormous tubes thrust heavenward: there are
Magicians springing up from undergrounds,
Askant in darkness, conjuring to a star.

Through night great hordes of suicide are hurled,
Men seeking on their way the selves they've lost;
Crook-backed they haunt all corners of the world,
And with their arms fro brooms they sweep the dust.

They are as dust, keep but a little while;
And as they move their hair drops out/ they run,
To hasten their slow dying. Then they fall,
And in the open fields lie prone,

But twitch a little still. Beasts of the field
Stand blindly round them, prod with horns
Their sprawling bodies till at last they yield,
Lie buried by the sage-bush, by the thorns.

But all the seas are stopped. Among the waves
The ships hand Rotting, scattered, beyond hope.
No current through the water moves,
And all the courts of heaven are locked up.

Trees do not change, the seasons do not change.
Enclosed in dead finality each stands,
And over broken roads lets frigid range
Its palmless thousand-fingered hands.

The dying man sits up, as if to stand,
Just one more word a moment since he cries,
All at once he's gone. Can life so end?
And crushed to fragments are his glassy eyes.

The secret shadows thicken, darkness breaks;
Behind the speechless doors dreams watch and creep.
Burdened by light of dawn the man that wakes
Must rub from grapish eyelids leaden sleep.

Umbra Vitae

Die Menschen stehen vorwärts in den Straßen
Und sehen auf die großen Himmelszeichen,
Wo die Kometen mit den Feuernasen
Um die gezackten Türme drohend schleichen

Und alle Dächer sind voll Sternedeuter,
Die in den Himmel stecken große Röhren.
Und Zaubrer, wachsend aus den Bodenlöchern,
In Dunkel schräg, die einen Stern beschwören,

Krankheit und Mißwachs durch die Tore kriechen
In schwarzen Tüchern. Und die Betten tragen
Das Wälzen und das Jammern vieler Siechen,
Und welche rennen mit den Totenschragen.

Selbstmörder gehen nachts in großen Horden,
Die suchen vor sich ihr verlornes Wesen,
Gebückt in Süd und West, und Ost und Norden,
Den Staub zerlegend mit den Armen-Besen.

Sie sind wie Staub, der hält noch eine Weile,
Die Haare fallen schon auf ihren Wegen,
Sie springen, daß sie sterben <nun> in Eile,
Und sind mit totem Haupt im Feld gelegen.

Noch manchmal zappelnd. Und der Felder Tiere
Stehn um sie blind, und stoßen mit dem Horne
In ihren Bauch. Sie strecken alle viere
Begraben unter Salbei und dem Dorne.

Die Meere aber stocken. In den Wogen
Die Schiffe hängen modernd und verdrossen,
Zerstreut, und keine Strömung wird gezogen
Und aller Himmel Höfe sind verschlossen.

Die Bäume wechseln nicht die Zeiten
Und bleiben ewig tot in ihrem Ende
Und über die verfallnen Wege spreiten
Sie hölzern ihre langen Finger-Hände.

Wer stirbt, der setzt sich auf, sich zu erheben,
Und eben hat er noch ein Wort gesprochen.
Auf einmal ist er fort. Wo ist sein Leben?
Und seine Augen sind wie Glas zerbrochen.

Schatten sind viele. Trübe und verborgen.
Und Träume, die an stummen Türen schleifen,
Und der erwacht, bedrückt von andern Morgen,
Muß schweren Schlaf von grauen Lidern streifen.

The Sleeper in the Forest

He's slept since daybreak. Since the sun struck red
into his wound through grey and swollen clouds
The leaves drip slowly still. The forest lies dead.
A small bird calls in sleep from the boughs.

The dead one sleeps, forgetting and forgotten in the
wood's whisper, always And the maggots
feeding deep within the skull's round cavern
sing him into dreams with whirring wingbeats.

How sweet, when sorrows end to dream the dream
of dissolution into light and earth,
to part from all, be nothing all time
and to drift downward like the night's own breath

to the kingdom of the sleepers. To the hetairai
of the dead below. To the high places
whose images ripple upon the river,
to their high tables, their long revelries.

Where in the festal cups dark fires blaze,
where countless lyres ring with gold enchantment.
Through high windows they look out on the waves
and fields of green that stretch to pallid distance.

He seems to smile out of the hollow skull,
he sleeps, a god by a sweet dream laid low.
In festering sores the fat worms swell,
they crawl engorged along his scarlet brow.

A butterfly comes down the gorge, to pause
over the flowers. And it sinks down listless
upon the wound, the great and blood-filled chalice
gleaming darkly like the velvet rose.

Der Schläfer im Walde

Seit Morgen ruht er. Da die Sonne rot
Durch Regenwolken seine Wunde traf.
Das Laub tropft langsam noch. Der Wald liegt tot.
Im Baume ruft ein Vögelchen im Schlaf.

Der Tote schläft im ewigen Vergessen,
Umrauscht vom Walde. Und die Würmer singen,
Die in des Schädels Höhle tief sich fressen,
In seine Träume ihn mit Flügelklingen.

Wie süß ist es, zu träumen nach den Leiden
Den Traum, in Licht und Erde zu zerfallen,
Nichts mehr zu sein, von allem abzuscheiden,
Und wie ein Hauch der Nacht hinabzuwallen,

Zum Reich der Schläfer. Zu den Hetairien
Der Toten unten. Zu den hohen Palästen,
Davon die Bilder in dem Strome ziehen,
Zu ihren Tafeln, zu den langen Festen.

Wo in den Schalen dunkle Flammen schwellen,
Wo golden klingen vieler Leiern Saiten.
Durch hohe Fenster schaun sie auf die Wellen,
Auf grüne Wiesen in den blassen Weiten.

Er scheint zu lächeln aus des Schädels Leere,
Er schläft, ein Gott, den süßer Traum bezwang.
Die Würmer blähen sich in seiner Schwäre,
Sie kriechen satt die rote Stirn entlang.

Ein Falter kommt die Schlucht herab. Er ruht
Auf Blumen. Und er senkt sich müd
Der Wunde zu, dem großen Kelch von Blut,
Der wie die Sammetrose dunkel glüht.

English translations of Heym's Poetry
By Antony Hasler

War

He is risen up who was so long asleep.
risen up below from great baulks buried deep.
In the dusk he stands there, giant and unknown,
and his black hand reaches up to crush the moon.

Far across the city's evening roar they loom
frost and shadows of a dark without a name.
The market's giddy maelstrom chills to ice.
A silence. Round they look. And no one knows.

In the streets it touches shoulders, cold and light.
A question. No one answers. And a face turns white.
Far away a chiming whimpers, high and thin,
And the beards all tremble on their pointed chins.

Now upon the mountains he begins to dance
And his cry sounds: On them, warriors! Advance!
And the chain that swings around him as he rolls
His black head roars and rattles with its thousand skulls.

Like a tower he tramples out the dying glow,
Where the day takes flight and blood-red the rivers flow.
Corpses passing number lie among the reeds,
Covered over white by death's enormous birds.

Over circled ramparts where blue fires wash,
Over lanes of black he stands where weapons clash,
Over portals where the sentries lie outspread,
Over bridges heavy with their mounds of dead.

In the night he hunts the fire, the red hound,
In a howl of savage mouths across the land.
Out of darkness rushes the black world of nights
Margined with volcanoes and their ghastly light.

Scattered on the lowlands far into the dark
A thousand pointed red caps flicker up and spark,
And all that down below over highways swarms
He sweeps into the pyres, to feed the hungry flames.

Forest after forest flames devour the groves,
Yellow bats all jagged clawing in the leaves.
Like a charcoal burner's boy he thrusts his poke
Deep into the trees, that the fire may burn its fill.

A mighty city sank in yellow smoke,
Slipped in silence into the abyss's throat.
But on burning ruins giant he stands high,
Whirls his torch three times across the wilds of sky.

On the mirrored glow in rags of storm-torn clouds,
On the icy wastes the death and death and darkness shroud,
Withering the farthest night his firebrands rain
Pitch and fire down of the cities of the plain.

Der Krieg

Aufgestanden ist er, welcher lange schlief,
Aufgestanden unten aus Gewölben tief.
In der Dämmrung steht er, groß und unerkannt,
Und den Mond zerdrückt er in der schwarzen Hand.

In den Abendlärm der Städte fällt es weit,
Frost und Schatten einer fremden Dunkelheit,
Und der Märkte runder Wirbel stockt zu Eis.
Es wird still. Sie sehn sich um. Und keiner weiß.

In den Gassen faßt es ihre Schulter leicht.
Eine Frage. Keine Antwort. Ein Gesicht erbleicht.
In der Ferne <wimmert> ein Geläute dünn
Und die Bärte zittern um ihr spitzes Kinn.

Auf den Bergen hebt er schon zu tanzen an
Und er schreit: Ihr Krieger alle, auf und an.
Und es schallet, wenn das schwarze Haupt er schwenkt,
Drum von tausend Schädeln laute Kette hängt.

Einem Turm gleich tritt er aus die letzte Glut,
Wo der Tag flieht, sind die Ströme schon voll Blut.
Zahllos sind die Leichen schon im Schilf gestreckt,
Von des Todes starken Vögeln weiß bedeckt.

Über runden Mauern blauem Flammenschwall
Steht er, über schwarzer Gassen Waffenschall.
Über Toren, wo die Wächter liegen quer,
Über Brücken, die von Bergen Toter schwer.

In die Nacht er jagt das Feuer querfeldein
Einen roten Hund mit wildem Mäuler Schrein.
Aus dem Dunkel springt der Nächte schwarze Welt,
Von Vulkanen furchtbar ist ihr Rand erhellt.

Und mit tausend roten Zipfelmützen weit
Sind die finstren Ebnen flackernd überstreut,
Und was unten auf den Straßen wimmelt hin und her,
Fegt er in die Feuerhaufen, daß die Flamme brenne mehr.

Und die Flammen fressen brennend Wald um Wald,
Gelbe Fledermäuse zackig in das Laub gekrallt.
Seine Stange haut er wie ein Köhlerknecht
In die Bäume, daß das Feuer brause recht.

Eine große Stadt versank in gelbem Rauch,
Warf sich lautlos in des Abgrunds Bauch.
Aber riesig über glühnden Trümmern steht
Der in wilde Himmel dreimal seine Fackel dreht.

Über sturmzerfetzter Wolken Widerschein,
In des toten Dunkels kalten Wüstenein,
Daß er mit dem Brande weit die Nacht verdorr,
Pech und Feuer träufet unten auf Gomorrh.

The Night

On serpent necks the stars swing blazing
Down over towers that are swaying
And roofs lying scourged. Through the path of the storm
Like a spirit, the leaping fire is playing.

Windows fiercely slam shut. And the walls, the old ones,
Tear wide the gates along their toothless jaw.
But the bridges have fallen across the cavernous maw
And Death stands outside, the old one.

But people are running shrieking and blind,
All unknowing, with sword and with lance.
Below a muffled echo, where bells in dance
Peal aloud, tugged by gusts of wind.

The squares lie deadened, red. Monstrous moons.
Heave themselves stiff-legged over the rooftops now,
Probing the chambers of feverish sleep with their glow,
And the pallor of linen grows chill spreads on the brow.

Hymn

Unending tides of waters roll over the highlands,
Unending seas bind the lasting earth in garlands,
Unending nights like armies of darkness advance
And rise in storm to trouble the upper clouds.

Unending organs roar in a thousand reeds,
All the angels shriek through their shrill pipes
Up past colossal towers that wandering climb
Into the bluer void of eternal space.

But hearts consumed in the torments of life below
To the blare of flutes' despairing cries
Heaved themselves up like shades in a mortal longing
Beyond the delights of sunset skies.

Die Nacht

Auf Schlangenhälsen die feurigen Sterne
Hängen herunter auf schwankende Türme,
Die Dächer gegeißelt. Und Feuer springet,
Wie ein Gespenst durch die Gasse der Stürme.

Fenster schlagen mit Macht. Und die Mauern,
die alten,
Reißen die Tore auf in zahnlosem Munde.
Aber die Brücken fallen über dem Schlunde
und der Tod stehet draußen, der Alte

Aber die Menschen rennen, ohne zu wissen
Blind und schreiend, mit Schwertern und Lanzen.
Unten hallet es dumpf, und die Glocken tanzen,
Schlagend laut auf, von den Winden gerissen

Die Plätze sind rot und tot. Und riesige Monde
Steigen über die Dächer mit steifen Beinen
Den fiebernden Schläfern tief in die Kammer zu
scheinen,
Und die Stirne wird fahl wie frierendes Leinen.

Hymne

Unendliche Wasser rollen über die Berge,
Unendliche Meere kränzen die währende Erde,
Unendliche Nächte kommen wie dunkele Heere
Mit Stürmen herauf, die oberen Wolken zu stören.

Unendliche Orgeln brausen in tausend Röhren,
Alle Engel schreien in ihren Pfeifen,
Über die Türme hinaus, die gewaltig schweifen
In ewiger Räume verblauende Leere.

Aber die Herzen, im unteren Leben verzehret,
Bei dem schmetternden Schalmeien verzweifelter
Flöten
Hoben wie Schatten sich auf im tödlichen Sehnen,
Jenseits lieblicher Abendröten.

Last Watch

How dark are your temples,
And how heavy your hands.
Far now you have traveled
Where my words do not sound.

Under the flame that wavers
So old and old you lie,
Your lips clenched forever
In bitter fixity.

Tomorrow will come a silence
And the air hold a faint
Rustle still perhaps of garlands
And a decaying scent.

But hollower now year by year
Will nights be left
Here where you head lay and always
You breathed so soft.

Letzte Wache

Wie dunkel sind deine Schläfen.
Und deine Hände so schwer.
Bist du schon weit von dannen,
Und hörst mich nicht mehr.

Unter dem flackenden Lichte
Bist du so traurig und alt,
Und deine Lippen sind grausam
In ewiger Starre gekrallt.

Morgen schon ist hier das Schweigen
Und vielleicht in der Luft
Noch das Rascheln von Kränzen
Und ein verwesender Duft.

Aber die Nächte werden
Leerer nun, Jahr um Jahr.
Hier wo dein Haupt lag, und leise
Immer dein Atem war

English Translations of Georg Heym's Work:

Poems: A Bilingual Edition · Translated by Antony Hasler · Northwestern University Press, 2006
The Thief and Other Stories · Translated by Susan Bennett · Libris, 1994

Secondary Material in English:

Georg Heym: A Reluctant Rebel by Egbert Krispyn · University of Florida press, 1968
The Era of German Expressionism · Edited by Paul Raabe · The Overlook Press, 1974

Set Sothis Nox La

As part of the foundational discussion that went into the creation of Amarantos between Joshua and I, we had the heightened awareness of dialogue as engagement towards the ennoblement of the human spirit. Since we are immersed in a myriad of perspectives towards the human condition and these perspectives also cross over into the pursuit of spiritual transformation, another key element of Amarantos, it seems fitting that along with my interview with Fauna, their horse or shaman drum, that too, he might engage in conversation about my own horse, the moniker Set Sothis Nox La.

- Interview by J. Joshua Phillips

The name that one chooses as a moniker can sometimes be seen as a microcosm or distillation of what they are attempting to relate more generally through their artistic expression. Is this the case for you? What led you to select "Set Sothis Nox La" as your nom de guerre?

I chose the moniker about a decade ago when I was working with Hexenhammer, which was an acoustic Black Metal band. We wanted to create personas for the project since some of the lyrics were based around the ideas of witch trials, the Spanish inquisition and the occult. At the time I was reading Kenneth Grant and the Jack Parsons biography that Feral Ward had released. Taking from Grant as published in Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God:

Set: The first and therefore oldest of the gods; the prototype of Shaitan or Satan, the God of the South whose Star is Sothis, the soul or "son" of Isis (i.e. Sept, goddess of the seven stars represented astronomically by Ursa Major in the northern heaven). The word *Set* or *Sut*, means "black."... in Magical terms, Set is the epitome of dormant subconscious atavisms.

Sothis: The Soul, or Star, of Isis: the Dog Star, Sirius, the stellar vehicle of Set. The Star of Set from which the transmission of the Ophidian Current derived. Sothis, a "twin" Star a perfect glyph of the twins (Set-Horus). Sirius 'A' is visible and Sirius 'B' is invisible, they represent Universes 'A' and 'B'.

Nox: Night, A name of Nuit and the keys of the abyss. A formula of dissolution that contains the mark of the beast. The total withdraw of consciousness from the phenomenal world. A secret name of the Goddess which, in its symbolic form represents the Mark of the Beast: hence Nox is sometimes called the Night of Pan.

La: Nuit. Goddess of the night sky, represented by a woman arched over the earth her body sewn with stars. Of vital importance to the Cult of Thelema. La=Not=Selflessness. The reverse of All "The" or God. NOT or the key to the Book of the Law and the basis from which the formula of the New Aeon springs LAShTAL.

Taken together Set, Satan or the Dog star, sirius, in the night of time, Not. It embodies certain elements of the in between-ness of Austin Osman Spare and speaks forwards and backwards. For me, there was a direct formula of transition, an awakening through the night into the mysteries which I feel are strongly feminine (but not wholly).

Since then I have continued to use it partially as a point to continue the inspiration and confluence of meaning of the selected words and intersecting relationships; but also perhaps to create an artistic separation from mundane life and the musical projects I work on. I think many people have several identities that inhabit their own body, and that work life, student life, and in some ways different sets of personal and professional acquaintances and interests draw out various threads of personal experience and self-definition. This is then also coupled with the perceptions of others based on those experiences. So, in some ways I see Set Sothis Nox La as being the formal face to those energies and a physical representation of a certain portion of my existence and manifestation on this plane. More simply, a name or vehicle for my musical endeavors and their various threads related to that endeavor en masse.

Your elucidation of the word meanings contains multilayered references to magic. Is taking on this name, which is certainly an expression of a particular aspect of your preexisting character, also an effort to willfully transmute your person into something more profound?

I think that Robert Anton Wilson characterized Magick best when he posited that Magick is best utilized as a means for personal self-transformation. My interests fall in line with this goal. In a similar manner, part of my interest in Georges Bataille also falls under the banner of your question. What I enjoy most about the goals of the original Acephale group was the intention of a re-sacralization of contemporary life, which has become sterile in the quest for modernity. Especially given the time frame that he was writing in, with the push for modern art and the "clean" lines of modern architecture, the sterility of the utopian vision at that point in the late thirties through the 50's where processed food became the wave of the future and who needs a balanced diet when we can take vitamins type attitude. Across the board we failed to maintain the balance with the "darker" elements of life and the associated base elements of life, philosophy, ideas and society. Though there has been some movement since that time in better directions the fact still remains that there remains little mystery in life today and no real sense of reverence for the planet that we live on. Bombarded by information we are numb and have lost our connection to our past and present which nullifies our hopes to garner any foothold into our future.

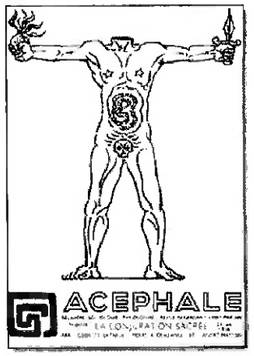
Where to go? Having been cut off from the past, where to begin? With the self. Even there, where to begin? In many ways Magick was a guiding path for many years, then I found Bataille and his writings speak to me. By using the moniker it does remind me of the associations within the words and thus remind me of the pursuit beyond the mundane.

However, I do find that the disassociation that is the result of the use of a moniker also good. Specifically, by choosing a moniker and doing work within that persona, or as you so well put it Nom de Guerre, it allows that energy, performance, set of writings and/or recordings to become it's own entity. It can then take its spiritual form and separate the mundane vehicle from whence it comes. Traditionally, masks and costumes played this role in sacred rituals. When the robes and masks were worn the people that wore these items were transformed into avatars. These people then take on the qualities of the gods or spirit forms. Through the usage of the Nom de Guerre I can leave behind my mundane life or at least divorce what is produced as Set Sothis Nox La from my mundane life. I do not seek to transform the world, though I do have a desire to speak and create, to think that there is not a responsibility that is the result of speaking or doing is folly. But I also desire my privacy too and do not like nor desire the cult of personality. Thus I have felt that the continued use of the name has been fitting in multiple ways.

Do you care to illumine our readers as to the history of Georges Bataille and the l'Acephale?

Georges Bataille was born September 10, 1897 in Billon, Puy-de-Dôme, in central France. Bataille's father, Joseph-Aristide, suffered from general paralysis due to syphilis. In 1913 he went mad and died three years later after Georges and his mother fled before the German invasion. Bataille converted to Catholicism early on but later rejected it after a loss in faith. In 1916-17 he served in the army, but was discharged because of tuberculosis. Ill health and bouts of depression continued to trouble Bataille his whole life. In the 20's he befriended Michel Leiris and was introduced to Surrealism. Georges was a fan of Dada but felt that instead of "No" they should say "Yes" to life. Similarly his interest with Surrealism was in an antagonistic relationship with Andre Breton and his was considered one of the leaders of the Dissident Surrealists who lead to the publication of "the Cadaver" mocking Breton's self importance.

In 1928, Bataille wrote his most famous book Story of the Eye, a highly charged erotic novel of excess. First published with illustration by long time friend Andre Masson. Later, there was an edition was published with illustrations by another key art friend Hans Bellmer. Bataille was involved with several groups and also published articles as well as working on journals. He was the first to publish many influential thinkers such as Barthes, Foucault and Derrida. Between 1929 and 1931 Bataille edited the journal Documents (1929-31) and in 1935 together with Breton and other formed the political anti-Fascist group Contre-Attaque. With the rise of Fascism and the downfall of the Spanish Revolution, Bataille rejected active politics and helped start two separate ventures Acéphale and the Collège de Sociologie.



In 1936, Bataille along with Andre Masson and other formed the secret society Acéphale organizing several nocturnal meetings in the woods, near an oak which had been struck by lightning. Members of the Acéphale society were required to adopt several rituals, such as refusing to shake hand with anti-semites and celebrate the decapitation of Louis XVI. Members of the society were also invited to meditation, on texts of Nietzsche, Freud, Sade and Mauss read during the assemblies. The figure of Acéphale recalls the headless god, the braying ass of the Gnostics but also Nietzsches's übermensch a being beyond human that is possible to become through self-overcoming. The group also extended their ideas through a series of 5 journals. The first 4 issues containing the subtitle: Religion, Sociology, Philosophy. Quotations fromSade, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche opened the first issue. Bataille quoted, "What looks like politics, and imagines itself to be political, will one day unmask itself as a religious movement." " We are fiercely religious...What we are starting is a war."

Acéphale was an avant-garde, pre-emptive strike on a world bristling with militarization, following Heraclitus, conflagrating conflict with cosmos. From Nietzsche Acéphale borrowed the notion that war along with political revolution and erotic ecstacy, constitutes the era's 'strongest stimulant to the imagination.' In 'The Practice of Joy Before Death' Bataille offers a heraclitian meditation: 'I myself am war... In the excessive and lacerating character of the pointless catastrophe that the present war is, it is nevertheless possible for us to recognize the unrestrained immensity of time which remains the mother of men and, plummeting in the chaos, with an unequalled disorder, the limitless annihilation of God.

In 1939, be co-founded with Michel Leiris and Roger Caillois the short-lived Collège de Sociologie featureing Pierre Klossowski, Pierre Libra, and Jules Monnerot. The Collège de Sociologie was a salon that held lectures on Sacred Sociology and was heavily influenced by Hegel, Freud, Marx, Marcel Mauss, the Marquis de Sade, Alexandre Kojève, and Friedrich Nietzsche, the last of whom he defended in a notable essay against appropriation by the Nazis.

Both projects projects sought transformation of self and society through the pursuit of the elevation of the human endeavor not beyond the self but through the self. The self that is both the individual and community and society hence both Anthropology and Philosophy intertwine with Mythology and Religion. In short the Sacred Sociology.

Bataille's writings after and during this period mark his most productive and in my mind the best most interesting work. His Summa Atheologica partially translated as "Inner Experience," "Guilty," and "On Nietzsche." Which inverts in some ways the writings of Thomas Aquinas. It is during this time that he also his novels The Blue of Noon, the Impossible and also both My Mother and Madame Edwarda. All of which, in their way, take on his base materialism striking to find a transcendent envisioning. Bataille's later work delves further into Art, Economics and beyond with his 3 volumes of the Accursed Share as well as Death and Sensuality, The Theory of Religion, the Tears of Eros and his expose on the birth of art in his book on the Lascaux caves. He also founded the longstanding journal Critique among other things. He died July 8th, 1962.

Was the l'Acephale active until Bataille's passing? If so, what happened to the organization after his demise?

The group Acéphale that Bataille was part of existed from 1936 -1939. The Secret Society and journal that they produced occured at the same time. There were a total of five issues during this time. In 1939, when the Germans invaded France, the group dissolved as some people fled France to New York and Bataille moved to southern France around this time due to health issues. He had contracted Tuberculosis during the First World War. This signaled the end of the group and Bataille focused on other other things. If memory serves me correct, The College of Sociology was still going for a brief time. He also continued to work on his Summa Atheologie, Madame Edwarda, The Dead Man and other writing.

You must have felt a strong kinship with Bataille and his thought to have taken up the banner of this historical entity. One of the (quite compelling) directives of the Acephale organization was to reveal the inherently spiritual nature of political issues in a "religious war." This is a complex goal that goes against the grain of the implicit agnosticism of America, at the same time as it appears disturbingly similar to fundamentalist rhetoric. Can you tell us something about how you see your Acephale as furthering this goal?

Batailles idea of the religious war and Acephale's conception of being fiercely religious but in a Nietszchean manner is in some ways strange and ambiguous when considered within a modern framework, and perhaps even stranger some 60's years later. Bastille felt that at the time of the creation of the Acephale group in the late 30's that politics and specifically left-ist politics, of which he was involved with up to this point, was not a viable form of social transformation. He felt that modern society had lost touch with what could be characterized as a general sense of the "sacred." For him the sacred was in some ways a general reverence for all natural things, be they beautiful or horrible. Modern religious groups complete denial of what is horrific was part of the problem. If you combine the desire for progressive social and political change with his desire for spiritual re awakening as well as the demand for the absolute reverence for the horrific you might see the impetus for his "religious war." He was careful to maintain that his fierce religiosity was under the banner of Nietzsche's attack on the concept of God and christianity. He was in association with people such as Simone Weil and other progressive spiritual people, but disliked that they shied away from the horrific or darker elements of life.

Stuart Kendall in his book on Bataille notes:

"The Goal of Acephale was to find and rediscover the totality of being. To seek, in other words, the integral or total being that one might be, as an individual body in the cosmos. The project derives from Heraclitus and Nietzsche but also from the Marquis de Sade. Sade's heroes became monstrous in their search for unique pleasures. They knew themselves to be contingent in their relationship to and place within nature. When Nietzsche's madman proclaimed the death of god, he simultaneously proclaimed the death of god's creation, man, the death of the christian conception of the cosmos and the death of christian community. In fulfillment of these proclamations acephale proposed a new community founded on the uniqueness of its members, a community, in other words, of difference." (Kendall, 2007 p.157)

Furthermore,

"In the Acephalic pursuit of joy before death, it was 'necessary to refuse boredom and live only for fascination.' As a celebration of the totality of life, joy before death proposed the 'only intellectually honest route in the search for ecstasy'. 'When we link an extreme joy to the dreadful consideration of death, when we link irony to anguish, we fulfill a liberation greater than any other.' " (Kendall, 2007 p.157)

However, it is important to also note that in the end he felt it was all a 'monstrous error' because the sacred can not be deliberately provoked as it lies beyond the realms of intentionality yet still he felt the draw to work towards this goal of a 'paradoxical religion: a religion of the death of god.'

This all however skirts the issue of your specific question, which is how does this relate to what L'Acephale's goals are. I chose the name to symbolically stand aside from the main associated themes of both Black Metal and Militaristic Neo Folk. Since I knew I wanted to sonically pursue those strands I knew that to tread those waters would be to find association with the worst of the intellectual elements of both especially since I wanted to combining the two. So by naming the band "the headless" there is already a subversion of the genre. Followed by the historical relationship to the themes that the original group took part in which I was deeply fascinated by. I hope that I am able to maintain the threads of some of the original aims of the group. I have already been criticized for delving into topics or ideas not specifically in the canon of Bataille and Acephale, but I do think that I am generally driven to re examine life from a spiritual space from a very acephalic view point. I believe that the aims and ideas of the original group and also more generally Batailles writings act like guiding stars in my night sky.

You initiated l'Acephale into the Black Metal and Neofolk worlds many years ago with an explicit intention towards "subversion of the genre[s]." Can you explain why you felt this necessary? Obviously the sonic textures of these musical tendencies resonated with you and suited your purposes. If your fundamental orientation was at odds with the prevailing rubric of these cultural forms, however, why engage with them?

In general, both musical genres tend towards a conservatism that I do not align with. Yet I am engaged with many of the ideas that both genres pursue or are influenced by. I am also highly influenced by the sonic textures that these same genres are gaining influence from as well. When I first became aware of the classic Norwegian Black Metal I was aware of its history, but because it was influenced by the specific metal bands it was, which were the exact same bands that I held in highest regard I had to hear it. Sonically it was exactly what I was hoping other forms of music would be. Blazingly fast, yet mixing ambient and long, orchestral musical structures. In terms of the ideas behind Black Metal, I am thoroughly interested in the occult, magick and horror, but not exclusively just that. With early bands like Ulver delving into mythology and literature these were also my interests and torch bearers for what I was interested in within the genre.

With Neofolk, I was drawn to it through my early interest in Harsh Noise and "Industrial" bands like Coil, Throbbing Gristle, Psychick TV and especially Current 93. The later of which, really drew me into the very folk style music with dark themed lyrics, which further blossomed from there. In particular these two genres were explored simultaneously which all seemed natural to me. Of course I muddle all my interests together so perhaps "natural" is not the best of terms. As Bataille and Acephale's interests are paradoxical so too seem the fundamental orientations when confronted with the more well known/feared "darkest" elements of both Black Metal and NeoFolk, that being White Power/supremacy doctrine and Neo-Fascism or more generally a radical conservatism similarly associated with these ideas and beliefs. But I think this is a polarizing question that in some ways posits that Black Metal and Neofolk are on opposite sides of my/l'Acephale's fundamental orientation.

Perhaps another quote from Bataille that I have been thinking about quite a bit of late, especially in the light of some criticism I have received about "Mord und Totschlag." I feel that in some ways the intense virulence that for me was a cathartic release, but also something more. To push into the virulence and accept the horror as one means of transcendence is to stretch towards what Bataille calls the Impossible.

"I first published this book fifteen years ago, giving it an obscure title: The Hatred of Poetry. It seemed to me that true poetry was reached only by hatred. Poetry had no powerful meaning except in the violence of revolt. But poetry attains this violence only by evoking the impossible. Almost no one understood the meaning of the first title, which is why I prefer finally to speak of : The Impossible.

It's true that this second title is far from being clearer.

But it may be one day...: I perceive the course of a convulsion that involves the whole movement of beings. This convulsion goes from death's disappearance to that voluptuous rage which, perhaps, is the meaning of the disappearance.

Humanity is faced with a double perspective: in one direction, violent pleasure, horror and death- precisely the perspective of poetry- and in the opposite direction, that of science or the real world of utility. Only the useful, the real have a serious character. We are never within our rights in preferring seduction: truth has rights over us. Indeed it has every right. And yet we can, and indeed we must, respond to something which, not being God, is stronger than every right, that impossible to which we accede only by forgetting the truth of all these rights, only by accepting disappearance."

(Georges Bataille. from the second preface to The Impossible)

The subversion of the genre is in part a re-focusing of the lens of the fascination of "violent pleasure, horror and death" or the prevailing rubric you speak of, with its association with the Impossible. By splitting hairs as to where ideas influenced certain people and maintaining the original Acephale aim of "saving Nietzsche from the Fascists" is to me subverting the genre(s). Additionally, the ideas from these genres that were perverted by specific individuals or groups within the genre are not indicative of a perverted totality but should be considered to be the actions and ideas of individuals and groups within the genre(s).

What is this horror of which you speak? If I understand correctly, you seem to suggest that an opening to the Impossible, via an embrace of "violent pleasure, horror and death," can potentiate liberation. How is this to occur?

I chose the word horror to fall in line with Bataille's quote. What he means by this is that in some ways these are the forces: supernatural, taboo, or otherwise that shatter the limit of the self. When we transition out of our positionality and reach the union outside of the psychological state of selfhood we reach what he calls the realm of the Impossible. These forces are not always as dark as he is indicting, but they respresent in a wholistic system of balance that understands the importance of the base material elements in life with those of the transcendent. In some ways we can look to the Chaos Magicians of today for an understanding of what he is saying. By using ecstatic states to align ones will with desire through the use of an experience or stimulus.

Similarly, in a world away for some, Audre Lorde describes a similar dynamic in her essay on the Erotic as Power. There she posits that you can reach this state in a number of ways by focused energy. Eros, born of Chaos, a deeply feminine energy. Where Bataille is drawn towards the rupturing of the self the goal is the same as Lorde's where she might use hard work, or focused writing to seek out the limit where the self falls away in experience.

The terms violent pleasure, horror and death were seen as symbolic ideological concepts that are representational of the elements that draw me to Black Metal and Neofolk. Virulent catharsis is one element that I feel is possible through the medium. Additionally I also feel that acknowledging those "dark" energies and their place in the natural world is a liberating endeavor or personal transformation and aligning one self within a broader sense of balance, which I would place under the banner of potential liberation. I think a simple concrete example perhaps

is listening to something noisy, harsh noise and blanketed distortion, loud. One submits to the din and at some point like the shaman being ripped asunder and entering the realm of the sacred, the wave of noise elevates the listener within to where they leave their self behind and become the sonic din. This sonic din is precisely the violent pleasure, horror and death of which Bataille is referring to.

It is a common refrain for people to praise music specifically for its capacity to take the listener, or especially the purveyor, beyond the self. Why do we crave this experience? What is it about music (I use the term loosely) that facilitates spiritual evolution, and how does self-annihilation figure in?

I think that this drive for a transcendental experience is based in human kind's social nature. The basis of music at large is in ritual. I feel that music was originally a sacred device used both in conjunction with sacred social rituals and also as a communication with nature and the spiritual plane itself. Tuvan Throat singing was developed to mimic nature through replicating the sounds of a stream, or the wind through a rocky pass. But also through the celebration of horses, without which much of Tuvan culture and work would be impossible. Likewise, I feel that music all over the world has historically played the role in social cohesion as well as communication/celebration of and with the spiritual realm.

Where this idea of music as communion with the spirit world meets the loss of self within a greater totality (self-annihilation) merge is when a person participates in a group event, or some social ritual, there is the impetus to join with the group in its activities. When I say this I mean on a basic rudimentary level, and specifically in a person to person/ person to group format. Not in the sense of a general need to fit in within a sub genre, but when someone willingly participates in a ritual event, specifically when the event has some sort of significant meaning, the person sheds their self and attains what I would consider a transcendental experience. What is more is that I feel that people have an innate drive towards this end. Specifically, I feel that people crave to transcend the limits of themselves with another person or persons. One way this is done is through sexuality where, ideally, people engage in a physical, sensual dialogue that leads to shared climax, in some ways this is the most polarized example of this idea. This is an idea I am taking from Bataille. At the moment of climax the self dissolves into the other and the entities are merged for a brief moment. Similarly, when Audre Lorde talkes about eros in a more general sense of shared intimacy or joined work, especially difficult work, the joined sense of purpose transcends the self. I feel that these transcending moments beyond the self are journeys into the sacred realm.

Self Annihilation, is this transcending of the self beyond the self. In many cultures there are spiritual traditions that lead the practitioners to mutilate the corporeal body as a means of spiritual evolution. They feel that the body is a mere vehicle for the spiritual self. For the "Book of Lies" cp, L'Acephale used a photo taken by Desire Dolron when she visited the Vegetarian Festival in Thailand. Devotees will stick skewers through their eyelids and cheeks using pain as a vehicle to transcend the self and into the realm of the sacred. Native Americans of North America from the plains regions had a similar ceremony called the Sun Dance where the chest was pierced by knives and strings where tied from their flesh to a pole. They would sing, play a simple pipe and dance for hours upon hours to days until reaching a state to receive a vision from the sacred realms.

In a more mundane way, these, what I would call instinctual urges, surface in modern culture as the craving to experience music; to be swallowed up within in it and lose the self to join the sacred, social realm.

You have been involved with many different musical projects. You have been the major impetus behind the life of l'Acephale, have collaborated on the development of Hail!, and have been a contributing member for the live manifestations of Waldteufel. Interestingly, none of these musical projects play live very often. In the context of your thoughts regarding collective ritual and self-annihilation, this is somewhat surprising. Can you say more about this? Do you find your psychic need for transcendence through music being met in the conceptualization and recording processes?

It is true that there is a certain irony here. My words regarding social cohesion through public ritual is perhaps incongruous with being involved in projects that do not perform live that much. However, shows and concerts in some ways do not manifest the concept of social ritual of the type that these various projects try to attain, either in theory or in the flesh as a live performance. Though socialization does occur at shows and some people have transformative experiences, the standard gig is more about mainstream modes of conformity. As you well know, to create, plan and execute a truly transformative live manifestation takes severe amounts of work and energy. Usually these manifestations have a specific purpose, which might not stand up to multiple recitations or performances. Even if the purpose allows for multiple recitations the energy to maintain these performances might not be possible or even desirable.

And this says nothing of how these manifestations are received in total, nor of the toll taken by meeting the resistance that arises when one is attempting to create and perform something special and transformative. This is particularly true when it occurs in an environment that is most likely focused on a mild addiction to substances and pursuit of ego satisfaction. I say *mild addiction*, but not to criticize alcohol or other substances, instead to place more emphasis on the *pursuit* of the substance over the music being performed or even further... what ideas might be being expressed within that music which is a bonus to the pursuit of the substance.

All of this is to say that live performance is not exactly a true "collective" ritual but more of a "social" ritual. Even then, that ritual is largely based on an overarching concept of re-affirmation towards the larger social group (or in our cases a smaller social group). Yet, each of my bands does perform live, albeit infrequently. I usually want there to be a certain occasion to mark the performance, be it another kindred spirit performing or a worthy event that coincides with the basic principles of the project. So, there is a need to lose one's self in live public ritual and this helped push forward the full band incarnation of L'Acephale, this desire to move beyond just the conceptual and recording processes.

I do enjoy the conceiving and recording process though. I like the immediacy of working on solo material and etching away at silence to create the sound that comes from within, or that calls from beyond to give voice to, or even to interweave the threads of voices that I hear and that seem to have commonality to me. I have strong desires to create sound in this manner, but I do tremendously enjoy being involved with a group that creates something together as I do feel that, at its best, that social interaction can create the most rewarding sounds and experiences.

AOS №7

Reviews of Things Musical

Agalloch "The White" cd ep
Vendulus Records 2008
http://www.vendlus.com/

This collection, which bookends Vendlus Record's other release "the Grey" ep, is a collection of neofolk and acoustic work that Agalloch have been working on over the past few years (2004-07). Having felt that Ashes Against the Grain was a bit more rock oriented than the absolutely brilliant the Mantle, I was quite pleased to read hints that this release was moving back towards my interests, thus I was very excited for the release. To say that it is an ep is a bit of an understatement. Clocking in at just over 32 minutes total I felt that this was a full release unto itself in many ways. I have read complaints that this ep could not stand up to Agalloch's fps and it was lacking a narrative, which I can sense for those who want more of the "epic, rocking" Agalloch, but the 7 songs presented here are quite satisfying and is reminiscent of Ulver's Kveldssanger, especially in terms of an over arching ocuure. As always the musicianship and production are outstanding. The white ep also features excellent guest contributions by Markus Wolff. The true standout for me is the preternatural Solvilo Runo ending with an excellent sample from the 1973 British cult classic "the Wicker Man." In fact the opening "Isle of Summer" and closing piece "Summertide Reprise" are also direct references to this superb film, these pieces also contain sound clips from the film. Those who might have missed the limited printing of 2000 copies may have heart that there are rumors that a vinyl version of both the Grey and the White forthcoming. To this we can certainly hope, as this is quite the stunning release and will remain in constant rotation in this household for many a year.

Arckanum – Antikosmos
Debemur Morti Productions
http://www.debemur-morti.com/

Longstanding Shamaatae project has had a recent flurry of activity. With a couple eps and this new cd of Raw Black Metal. I have found his release fairly interesting. A solo project that flirts with the lo-fi classic old school approach while mining the "Troll" theme yet aborning his releases with Runes and other almost NSBM elements and satanic magickal ritualism. He seems to be combining all the KVLT elements into one Uber "whole art" except that Shamaatae is Scandinavian. For all this set up of potential criticism the fact remains that he pulls it off very convincingly. At every step each piece fits perfectly. Instead of lo-fi primitivism we are greeted with excellent simple production in almost a Necromorbus fashion. Reminiscent of the best Horna releases, great guitar tones and great non-trigger sounding drum recording combine to take on the mantle of Quorthon. That maybe a little far, but truly I am impressed, particularly so with the divergence from the BM formula on Blóta Loka with guest dark ambience by Raos131. The booklet that comes in the A5 DVD case is stark black and white filled with arcane imagery and rune tablet style lyric sheets and is well designed and engaging while not conceding. If only Darkthrone could be this good now. Arckanum are the perfect torchbearers of what modern throwback KVLT worshippers should be doing. One last word, Arckanum are not Pagan but a Chaos-Gnostic, definitely check out his website for a lot more information about his ideas and vision, it is quite fascinating and he is verbose in the best of ways on the subject. Highly Recommended. Hail Ragna Rok!

Arckanum – Antikosmos ep.
Debemur Morti Productions
http://www.debemur-morti.com/

Taking the great Fenriz inspired track Rokulfargnyr from the full length and matching that track with a Holy Moses cover, Current of Death, leads to an excellent single in support. One almost wishes that it were an alternate take perhaps but nonetheless, it is a great track and the flip side of the thrash-anthemic is worth tracking down in its own right. A great place to start if you have not heard Arckanum before.

Arckanum – Grimalkinz Skaldi ep
Blut & Eisen / Carnal Records

A bit more lo-fi than the great Antikosmos of this year this ep is still excellent. I enjoy the fact that Leftatta ok Dostbust utilizes distortion on the bass. I also like the simple delay on the vocals as well. Leftatta is a faster more complex song and Spyrin vm Grimalkin completes the range of styles Arckanum offers with a more midpaced meets double bass elements with an experimental sample break in the middle. A great ep to track down.

Ásunder "Works Will Come Undone" cd
Profound Lore Records 2006
http://www.profoundlorerecords.com

Not perhaps the most timely of reviews perhaps being a couple years after the fact, yet what still compels me to write this review is that if for some reason you have not heard of this San Francisco super star ensemble, than perhaps this review will entice you towards their magnificence. Truly this release is the high water mark of doom. The beauty and pace of this release is staggering; majestic, stirring and yet delectably unsettling in the best ways. Two tracks A Famine and Rite of Finality comprise 72 minutes. Which is not entirely true. Rite of Finality ends with a low bass drone that trails off and hovers for some 25 minutes mixed in with subtle Tibetan chanting barely audible. Some might be put off by the time lengths of these tracks but know that each song is perfectly balanced and develops graciously and entices the listener like a willow wisp drawing you ever deeper into the doom laden swamps. A brilliant release.

Deathspell Omega – Veritas Diaboli Manet in Aeternum cd
Norma Evangelium Diaboli 2008
http://www.noevdia.com/ - www.theajnaoffensive.com/

Chaining the Katechon is another departure from the "trilogy" they have been working on. Similar to their tracks from the two comps "Crushing the Holy Trinity" and "From Entrails to the Dust" in the sense of self contained epic endeavors. This track clocks in at 22:11 and continues the tradition of over the top avant-garde "Orthodox Black Metal." The production values have remained top notch, clean production gives each instrument space to be highlighted. As always, outstanding drumming and very interesting guitar work highlight the dark path with Mikko's perfect narrator skills throughout. His combination of vocal styles keeps the flow of almost continuous lyrics from growing stale. Few singers can manage such verbosity and not seem to overstay their welcome. It also seems that there are guest vocals in parts as well as new ground Mikko is breaking. Clean sung vocals? A trend in more than one recently for the Orthodox B.M. hordes.
I always appreciate their use of effects and samples. The result of all these elements, continue to secure their place at the utmost pinnacle of all Black Metal Hordes. High concept and excellent realization maintain a high water mark for the cannon and that does not even speak to the continued brilliant designing of each release. Outstanding! Highly recommended.

Fen – Malediction Fields
Code666 Records
http://www.code666.net/

One of the U.K.'s newest contenders for the throne of post Ulver meets alternative rock ala Agalloch and Alcest. This merging of styles is done fairly well. My biggest complaint is the production. It is recorded well but the choice of a dark reverb tone in the realm of the worst Griegdallen Norwegian style of production is not my first choice for tone styles. However my initial off put by the overall sound is more than compensated by well written songs with very interesting developments. A nice balance of Black Metal with folk sounds and some shoegazer post rock for ambience. Very well done I would say in the end. I am interested to see where this bands goes next as I feel that the best is yet to come.

Funeral Mist – Marantha
Norma Evangelium Diaboli 2008
http://www.noevdia.com/ - www.theajnaoffensive.com/

Arioch returns to record the new Funeral Mist lp after being recruited to sing for Marduk. Though I have enjoyed his contributions to Marduk especially in regards to their art department, I have been hoping that Funeral Mist might resurface. Salvation ranks very high in my list of essential Black Metal albums. The bizarre delirium of the songwriting and delivery is brilliant, especially for me on Salvation's "Sun of Hope" with its samples from Bergman's the Seventh Seal. This new record, thought may not be as outstanding as Salvation, is still very good and worth tracking down through the fine folks at Ajna Offensive in the US.

Knox Om Pax – Laudanum
Destructive Industries
www.myspace.com/knoxompax - www.autopsykitchen.com

Simply stunning and beautiful, this release is a collection of acoustic sounding instruments that have been processed giving the entire piece a dark ambient feel. The songs are melancholic, provoking and devastating. This is really one of the best dark ambient releases ever. Completely mandatory.

October Falls – The Womb of Primordial Nature
Debemur Morti Productions
http://www.debemur-morti.com/default.php

Consisting of 4 untitled pieces directed at exploring the dark undercurrents of mankind and also the wolf in man The Womb of Primordial Nature by Finnish Mikko Lehto is bound to be a landmark event in the post Bergtatt era of Pagan Black Metal. Along with Wolfsbetan and Helrunar, October Falls now stand as a pillar in what some might call Norwan worship. To these ears however I say to Christian Hell with these neigh sayers. By Odin and Ulfa I love it. Romantic acoustic passages and horn raising metallic parts that steer well clear the tragic horror of Gothic decrepitude and also the farcical pomp of the worst of the Folk Metal scene; this is what I love. For fans of Agalloch, trilogy era Ulver, early Burzum, Helrunar and the woefully underrated Wolfsbetan this is an outstanding release.

Orlog – Elysion
Det Germanske Folket
http://www.ureuropa.com

It was stated that this is some of the darkest material they have written and it is. I had quite enjoyed their debut "...." And have been waiting for quite a while now to see what their next release would be like. This does not disappoint and in fact the release gets better as the songs move along, their urgency becoming more pronounced and songwriting escalating towards its climax. This might not be the most dark of all Black Metal but I do not think that was their intention as the comment was self-reflective. This is however, excellent, well produced Black Metal from an excellent label. A resounding release.

Sonne Hagal – Fordansfrost cd
Tesco Distribution
www.tesco-distro.com/
http://store.tesco-distro.com

Sonne Hagal's new release features 3 different cover arts all by Fabrice Willard of Divine Comedy records. This art beautifully encapsulates the music within. This is perhaps my favorite release by this mysterious band. It features many guest artists from the Neo Folk community: Waldteufel, Ernte, Of the Wand and the Moon, Darkwood, In Gowan Ring and Sturmpercht among others. Such usage in this case elevates the material and creates a more comprehensive album. The dynamic range of this release is quite impressive. From quiet and delicate folk songs to almost lighthearted danceable tracks such as Hidden Flame. While other tracks such as "the Hawk" are spine tingling with the haunting female vocals. The development of cd from song to song is terrific, not one track seems filler but an important developmental step along a path.

The production is perfect to these ears. The only thing I can say I wished to have with this release is that I generally prefer it when lyrics are printed. This is a small concern really when you can hear all the words, still it is nice. Certainly, it has not prevented it from being continuously played in this household. A beautiful and amazing release worth tracking down all the variant versions of the cd, we can only hope that a vinyl version will follow at some point and life will be complete.

Sorc'henn – Faro
Crucial Blast records/Crucial Bliss
http://www.crucialblast.net/

Based around a short poetic piece written by Hilary .... Sorc'henn the vehicle for Laurent's sonic alchemy, continue the trend of droning atmosphere that is partially electronic and also part Music Concrete with tape loop sounding environments and sound collage. Faro also features several guest vocalists. Enigmatic and engaging! However, as one of the contributors to this release, perhaps judgment is best perhaps reserved. I still encourage you to seek it out along with his many other fine releases.

Wolfhetan – Entrückung cd
Irminsul Records
www.eisenton.de/

As is most apparent by the 13 pages devoted to them elsewhere in this zine I am a fairly big fan of their work. On the Metal Archives website I gave this record a 100 and I still stand by this rating. This is outstanding and the songwriting of the entire record and the way that the songs work with each other in total sum is brilliant. But not only that the actual cd is stunning. A digibook format with color booklet and spot varnish design on the cover, it is a beauty to hold. I eagerly await to hear the new record and to see the next release.